



# HOW TO READ CHINESE POETRY

*A Guided Anthology*

ZONG-QI CAI

*editor*





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EDITED BY ZONG-QI CAI

Columbia University Press New York



Columbia University Press wishes to express its appreciation for assistance given by the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange in the publication of this book.

Columbia University Press wishes to express its appreciation for assistance given by the Pushkin Fund toward the cost of publishing this book.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS  
*Publishers Since 1893*  
New York Chichester, West Sussex  
[cup.columbia.edu](http://cup.columbia.edu)

Copyright © 2008 Columbia University Press  
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E-ISBN 978-0-231-51188-9

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data  
How to read Chinese poetry: a guided anthology / edited by Zong-qi Cai.  
p. cm.

Chinese and English.  
Includes bibliographical references and index.  
ISBN 978-0-231-13940-3 (cloth: alk. paper)  
ISBN 978-0-231-13941-0 (paper: alk. paper)  
ISBN 978-0-231-51188-9 (electronic)

1. Chinese poetry—History and criticism. 2. Chinese poetry—Translations into English. I. Cai, Zong-qi. II. Title.  
PL2308.H65 2007  
895.1'1009—dc22  
2007023263

A Columbia University Press E-book.  
CUP would be pleased to hear about your reading experience with this e-book at [cup-ebook@columbia.edu](mailto:cup-ebook@columbia.edu).

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## A NOTE ON HOW TO USE THIS ANTHOLOGY



The goal of this anthology is to help students overcome language barriers and engage with Chinese poetical texts in ways that yield as much aesthetic pleasure and intellectual insight as one gets from the originals.

This anthology features 143 famous poems composed over a period of almost three millennia stretching from the early Zhou all the way to the Qing, the last of China's dynasties, which ended in 1911. These poems are all called "classical poems," and classical they truly are—in terms of both their pastness and their revered quality. Yet many of them, especially those written by Tang and Song masters, are amazingly modern or contemporary in the sense that they are being fondly read and recited by millions of Chinese people. In fact, when educated Chinese are called on to recite some poems, what they recite are most likely classical poems rather than those written by modern or contemporary poets. Moreover, many of them continue to write poems in classical forms. So, unlike classical Western poetry, classical Chinese poetry may be regarded as a living tradition, enhanced by the audio-video gadgets of the information age.

A student of Chinese language and culture can and should be an active participant in this great tradition. To aid in the learning process, we introduce here a new approach to the presentation and the interpretation of Chinese poetical texts.

The learning of Chinese poetry should, we believe, begin with a deep, intense engagement with poetical texts—both in the original and in translation. But most major English-language anthologies of Chinese poetry offer only the English translation. Under such circumstances, students cannot possibly understand how diverse poetic elements work together in the original. In translation, many Chinese poems, especially those written in a highly condensed style, can easily appear hackneyed.

Real engagement with poetical texts should be nothing less than an intense visual, oral, and aural experience. Like Chinese readers, students

should be able to see the physical shape of a poem in Chinese, read it out loud, and hear it read fluently in the original. So, departing from the common practice of presenting only English translations, we provide Chinese texts, romanizations, a sound recording, and word-for-word translations as well. With only a few exceptions, the poems presented in this anthology are translated by the contributors.

The inclusion of the Chinese texts reveals the nonalphabetical nature of Chinese writing. The romanizations make apparent the monosyllabic and tonal nature of Chinese characters. They carry tone marks that will aid students in reading the poems aloud or reciting them in modern standard Chinese (Mandarin). In some chapters, we also give samples of reconstructed ancient and medieval pronunciations to show how the poems were probably pronounced when they were composed. Some pronunciations are lost in modern Chinese and are preserved only in southern dialects, such as Cantonese. Reading ancient and medieval poems in those dialects restores some of the lost aural nuances.

The sound recording (available online at <http://www.cup.columbia.edu/static/cai-sound-files>) adds an invaluable dimension to the reading of the poems, turning the silent characters into living speech. We urge readers to listen to the recording repeatedly in order to get a good sense of Chinese metrics. In Chinese poetry, the prescribed rhythm of sounds does not merely yield musical pleasure and “an echo to the sense,” as Alexander Pope said about English poetry, but it *is* the sense itself because it dictates how words are arranged to generate meaning.

The word-for-word translations, provided for all the tonally regulated poems, afford a direct look at the noninflectional nature of Chinese and demonstrate how the absence of inflectional tags changes the entire dynamic of reading. Instead of being told the poet’s feelings and thoughts, we are often expected to experience them ourselves while creatively engaging words and images in a dynamic interplay. This is particularly true of the highly condensed and allusive works produced by the literati poets. For learners of Chinese, the word-for-word translations provide a handy collection of glosses that should facilitate their learning of characters.

A number of other features of this anthology are crucial to a full comprehension of Chinese poetry. To begin with, each of the 143 poems is accompanied by a detailed commentary, allowing readers to gain a deep appreciation of the intricate interplay of word, image, and sound in

Chinese. In analyzing the 143 poems, we have applied various modern methods of close reading and have drawn from contemporary critical theories dealing with oral performance, gender, power, and aesthetics. In addition, this anthology offers two systems of cross-reference. Names and terms in boldface type alert readers to relevant entries in the glossary-index, which contains additional information and references to related subjects of interest. The thematic table of contents offers an equally extensive system of cross-references at a broader level. It surveys the intellectual and cultural milieu of the poems as well as the development of themes, prosody, diction, syntax, and structure in Chinese poetry. By means of these aids, we hope to provide the kind of anthology thus far available to only Chinese readers, one that will help raise the knowledge and appreciation of Chinese poetry among English-language audiences to a new level.

Z.C.



# MAJOR CHINESE DYNASTIES



Xia	ca. 2100–ca. 1600 B.C.E.	
Shang	ca. 1600–ca. 1028 B.C.E.	
Zhou	ca. 1027–256 B.C.E.	
Qin	221–206 B.C.E.	
Han	206 B.C.E.–220 C.E.	
Former Han	206 B.C.E.–8 C.E.	
Later Han	25–220	
Three Kingdoms	220–265	
Shu	221–263	
Wu	222–280	
Wei	220–265	
Jin	265–420	
Western Jin	265–317	
Eastern Jin	317–420	
Southern and Northern Dynasties		Six Dynasties
<i>Southern</i>	420–589	
(Liu) Song	420–479	
Qi	479–502	
Liang	502–557	
Chen	557–589	
<i>Northern</i>	386–581	
Sui	581–618	
Tang	618–907	
Five Dynasties	907–960	
Song	960–1279	
Northern Song	960–1127	
Southern Song	1127–1279	
Yuan	1279–1368	
Ming	1368–1644	
Qing	1644–1911	

## SYMBOLS



	Oblique tone in a prosody table
—	Level tone in a prosody table
△	End rhyme in level tone
▲	End rhyme in oblique tone
◦	Minor pause between a monosyllabic word and a disyllabic compound in a pentasyllabic or heptasyllabic line
C1.2	Chapter 1, second poem
<b>Chuci</b>	Important names, terms, and titles—if they appear in more than one chapter—are set in boldface at their first appearance in a chapter and are cross-referenced in the glossary-index.
合	A black dot beneath a character indicates that it is pronounced in the entering tone (characterized by an unaspirated <i>p</i> , <i>t</i> , or <i>k</i> ending) in Middle Chinese. All entering-tone characters in recent-style <i>shi</i> poems and in the end rhymes of <i>ci</i> poems have been so identified. The reconstructed pronunciations of these characters are given in “Phonetic Transcriptions of Entering-Tone Characters” at the end of this anthology.



## Introduction

### Major Aspects of Chinese Poetry

Poetry enjoys an unrivaled status in traditional Chinese literature and culture. The *Shijing* (*The Book of Poetry*), compiled around 600 B.C.E., is the earliest extant collection of Chinese poems and was regarded by Confucius as an essential part of his educational program. He considered its mastery as a prerequisite for anyone entrusted with state business. In subsequent dynasties, the status of poetry steadily increased. Not only did scholars assiduously study the *Book of Poetry* as a Confucian classic, but they also occupied themselves with writing poetry in ever more diverse and complex forms. Poetic composition became their indispensable medium of self-expression, social criticism, and even career advancement. Poetic excellence often earned them social prestige as well as entry into officialdom. Common people were equally engaged in composing, chanting, and singing poetry. Their oral tradition was instrumental to the rise of all major Chinese poetic genres.

This anthology traces the evolution of this great poetic tradition as it presents 143 famous poems composed over the long period of almost three millennia. As we read through these poems, we shall gain insight into the major aspects of Chinese poetry. To prepare for our intense engagement with the poems, let me provide highlights of these aspects.

### THEMES

A quick and easy way to get acquainted with Chinese poetry is to review the eleven themes listed in the thematic table of contents, which lie at the core of the evolving Chinese poetic canon.

“Love and Courtship” is a prominent theme in the airs of the *Book of Poetry*. Many of the airs are bona fide erotic love songs, featuring

unabashed accounts of a tryst or an affair. In these songs, women show few signs of inhibition and, indeed, are often the daring and resourceful initiators of a secret affair. Such uninhibited, self-willed women are not seen in later literati compositions, with the exception of Yuan song poems (*sanqu* [chap. 16]). In most literati compositions, women often fall into two rather static types: the beautiful and the abandoned.

“The Beautiful Woman” shows how the literati reconceptualized woman as an abstract, static object of desire—for spiritual fulfillment, sensual pleasure, or both. In “On Encountering Trouble” (C2.3), by Qu Yuan (340?–278 B.C.E.), the first-known literati poet, we can already see feminine beauty conspicuously transformed into a symbol of moral virtue. This allegorization of feminine beauty continues to figure prominently in later poetry and criticism. At the same time, the beautiful woman often appears as a tangible, pleasurable object of a male poet’s gaze (C12.5). By depicting her with evocative yet elegant diction, a male poet seeks to play out his erotic fantasy in a “cultured” fashion. This aestheticization of erotic engagement, real or imagined, is a prominent feature of countless poems about palace ladies and courtesans. According to many critics, some poems on palace ladies written by the Liang poets were also, if not solely, meant to convey the Buddhist belief about the illusory nature of human existence (C7.6). In these poems, the allegorical and the sensual, the sacred and the profane, seem to be intertwined.

“The Abandoned Woman” is a theme that usually involves female impersonation by literati poets. It is true that many anonymous *yuefu* and *ci* poems on this theme strike us as authentic self-expressions of real-world abandoned women. If composed by a male literatus, however, a poem on the abandoned woman is most likely a thinly veiled lamentation of his own. By using the persona of an abandoned woman, a literatus hoped to touch his estranged patron and thus increase his chances of regaining his favor (C5.4–7).

“Eulogy and Admonition” is probably a major ancient theme that ceased to be prominent after the Han. Most of the great odes and hymns in the *Book of Poetry* are eulogies to dynastic founders, mythical or historical (C1.13). Along with praise for dynastic founders, these poems often contain admonitory passages, usually a general warning to the Zhou people rather than a full-fledged admonition directed to a specific ruler. The theme of eulogy and admonition reaches its high point in the large *fu* (*dafu*) of the Han. In the grand *fu* on the Han capitals by Ban Gu (32–92) and Zhang Heng (78–139), we see a profound transformation of

the eulogistic tradition. If the odes and hymns in the *Book of Poetry* praise the ancient rulers by enumerating their heroic deeds, these famous *fu* works eulogize the living Han emperors through an encyclopedic display of the splendors of their empire. The transformation of the admonitory tradition is equally profound in the large *fu*. In “*Fu* on the Imperial Park” (C3.1), by Sima Xiangru (179–117 B.C.E.), for instance, we observe the author tactfully admonishing the emperor for his indulgence in hunting by telling a story about an extravagant imperial hunting excursion. Lord No-such and the Son of Heaven, two key figures of that story, mirror the author and his intended reader or listener, Emperor Wu. This admonitory poem is a far cry from the general, impersonal admonitions of the *Book of Poetry*.

New themes on the lives of the literati rose to take center stage during the Six Dynasties period. These themes reflect the three worlds in which the literati lived: the worlds of culture and politics, of nature, and of the imagination.

“The Wandering Man” (*youzi*) is an enduring theme about the world of culture and politics. It comprises a broad array of depressing topos and motifs: the physical hardships of travel on official duty, the unreliability of political patrons, the treacherousness of court politics, the spectacle of famine and exploitation, the incessant frontier wars, the prolonged introspection of an insomniac man, the departure of a beloved friend, and, above all, the constant homesickness of a scholar-official. Whether for genuine self-expression or as pure literary exercise, literati poets habitually chose to portray themselves as lonely, world-weary wanderers perpetually yearning for home. Of course, in reality the world of culture and politics is not all travail and suffering. “The Depiction of Things” speaks to the leisurely lifestyle enjoyed by some literati poets closely associated with the imperial court.

The world of nature, by contrast, furnishes a backdrop for two themes marked by spontaneous joy and spiritual fulfillment: “Landscape” and “Farming and Reclusion.” For Xie Lingyun (385–433), Xie Tiao (464–499), and others caught in the throes of public life, a landscape-viewing journey provided a welcome escape from cares and offered pleasures of the mind unobtainable by viewing palace ladies or objects of culture. To lofty-minded poets like Tao Qian (365?–427), it is a tranquil farmstead that promised deliverance from the corrupt political world and a transcendent union with the Dao, the everlasting process of nature. Together, the two Xies’ landscape poetry and Tao Qian’s farmstead

poetry marked the epoch-making discovery of nature as a primary poetic subject in its own right.

The world of the imagination is the venue for two other important themes: “Imagined Journey to the Celestial World” and “Remembrances.” Transcendental roaming (*youxian*), a theme first found in ancient shamanistic songs (C2.1–3), is of perennial interest to literati poets. It enables them to fantasize a solitary escape from the mundane world into a pure land of eternal bliss. It also furnishes them with an effective means of ridiculing all worldly attachments. Reflections on history (*yongshi*) also offer an imaginary flight of the mind, but one within the bounds of historical time and place. They often engender a somber brooding over an irrevocable loss—the death of a loved one, the destruction of a mighty army, the loss of an empire, to name just a few. They tend to end with a melancholy lamentation over the evanescence of all things, grand or small, and the ultimate futility of all human endeavors. Not all historical reflections, however, are negative and gloomy. By looking to the past, some poets, like Tao Qian, found spiritual companions and noble models for emulation in times of adversity.

All these literati-centered themes, once firmly established during the Six Dynasties, remained preeminent in the poetic canon until the twentieth century. After the Six Dynasties, the creative energy of Chinese poets seems to have been directed to broadening and deepening these themes rather than searching for new ones. Think, for instance, of the full flowering of landscape poetry and farmstead poetry during the Tang and Song. Consider, also, how the theme of “Hardship and Injustice” was brought to a new height by Bai Juyi (772–846) and Yuan Zhen (779–831), the leaders of the New *Yuefu* movement. In revisiting old themes, Tang and Song poets displayed extraordinary innovation and sophistication in blending culture, nature, and imagination. In the pentasyllabic regulated verses by Du Fu (712–770), for instance, the worlds of nature and man are deftly merged into a grand cosmic vision (C8.1). In the finest heptasyllabic regulated verses by Du Fu and Li Shangyin (813?–858), contemporary politics, dynastic history, legends, and personal experiences are seamlessly interwoven into a tapestry of exquisite beauty (C9.3, C9.6, and C18.1).

The dominance of literati themes inevitably led to a marginalization or even an exclusion of themes deemed irreconcilable with refined literati taste. For instance, most literati poets sought to sanitize erotic songs by means of allegory or aestheticization. Bawdy themes were thus

suppressed, with no small loss to the Chinese poetic tradition. Hence, there is an absence of much-needed comic relief and the loss of an opportunity to turn comic ribaldry into an effective means of social and religious satire, as Geoffrey Chaucer did so admirably in *The Canterbury Tales* and John Donne in his metaphysical poetry. Not until the Yuan dynasty, when Chinese literati had become disenfranchised and had lost their role as defenders of mores and refined taste, did they begin to embrace bawdy themes in song poems and drama (*zaju*), two new genres of popular entertainment on which many of them depended for their livelihood ([chap. 16](#)). Besides comic relief, ribaldry allowed Yuan literati writers to mock their own shattered dreams of officialdom and thereby dissipate their despair under the oppressive Mongol rule. Indeed, a rambunctious love poem often belies the heartbreaking poignancy of such self-mockery.

Literati dominance also meant the virtual exclusion of women poets from the canon. Most major poetic anthologies feature only a tiny number of women poets, typically the wives, concubines, or courtesans of the imperial family and renowned literati figures. Relegated to the very end of those anthologies, these women poets became a mere appendage to the male literati poets. As I have noted, male poets even appropriated the voices of women. So when women poets sought to express themselves, they had to find ingenious ways to negotiate around those voices. Some talented women poets rose to this challenge and successfully created genuine, effective voices of their own. Li Qingzhao (1084–1151), for example, expressed her personal feelings in *ci* poems of the greatest lyric intensity and finest artistry, which earned her a prominent place in a Chinese poetic pantheon otherwise made up solely of men ([C13.4](#)).

## GENRES AND SUBGENRES

On a more abstract plane, the history of Chinese poetry may be understood in terms of the evolution of its major genres and subgenres, which are extensively examined in this anthology. There are five major genres in Chinese poetry: *shi*, *sao*, *fu*, *ci*, and *qu*. Each has traditionally been labeled with a particular historical period in which it achieved dominance: Chu *ci*, Han *fu*, Tang *shi*, Song *ci*, and Yuan *qu*. Such labeling may give the wrong impression of a unilinear development of one genre supplanting another. In fact, all five genres continued to be used and even flourished well beyond the dynasties that witnessed their



preeminence. With the exception of *sao*, they remained influential until the twentieth century.

Each of the five genres has a unique pedigree of subgenres. The pedigree of the *shi* subgenre is the most complex of all. Owing to an almost uninterrupted development of about two and a half millennia, it had an ever-expanding corpus that continually needed to be reorganized. Tetrasyllabic *shi* poetry, represented by the *Book of Poetry*, is the oldest *shi* subgenre. The *Book of Poetry* is divided by provenance and function into three groups: airs (*feng*), odes (*ya*), and hymns (*song*) ([chap. 1](#)). During the Han, tetrasyllabic *shi* poetry experienced a radical decline and gradually became a niche subgenre of court eulogies and hymns ([C4.1–3](#)). This made room for the meteoric rise of pentasyllabic *shi* poetry. This new *shi* subgenre emerged toward the end of the Han ([chaps. 4 and 5](#)) and quickly achieved dominance in the Six Dynasties period ([chaps. 6 and 7](#)). By the sixth century, the *shi* corpus had become so large that Xiao Tong (501–531), Crown Prince Zhaoming of Liang, undertook to divide it almost entirely by theme into twenty-four subgenres. This new thematic scheme, however, did not catch on. The Early Tang witnessed the rise and explosive growth of tonally regulated *shi* poetry. It was not long before regulated *shi* poetry came to rival its old unregulated brethren in importance, if not in sheer volume. This gave rise to a broad bipartite division: “ancient-style *shi* poetry” (*gushi*, *guti shi*) and “recent-style *shi* poetry” (*jinti shi*). The former includes all earlier tonally unregulated *shi* poetry: pentasyllabic poems, irregular-line *yuefu* poems, and others. The latter encompasses two subgenres: regulated verse (*lüshi* [[chaps. 8, 9, 15, and 17](#)]) and quatrains (*jueju* [[chaps. 10, 15, and 17](#)]). These two new subgenres are, in turn, divided by per-line syllabic count into pentasyllabic and heptasyllabic. This complex multilevel scheme of classification was extensively employed in Ming and Qing anthologies of *shi* poetry.

The pedigrees of the other four genres are much more straightforward. Strictly speaking, *sao* poetry ([chap. 2](#)) has no subgenres: most *sao* poems of later times are closely modeled after the original *Chuci* style, marked by extensive use of its signature pause-indicating word *xi*.<sup>1</sup> The *fu* genre is often divided by length and subject matter into the large *fu* ([chap. 3](#)), known for its encyclopedic depiction of Han imperial grandeur, and the small *fu*, known for its shorter length and its lyrical intensity, even though other, more elaborate schemes of division have been devised to accommodate the rich variety of *fu* poems composed after the Han. The

*ci* genre is usually divided by length into short song lyrics (*xiaoling* [chap. 12]) and long song lyrics (*manic* [chaps. 13 and 14]). The *qu* genre is usually divided and categorized according to its association with dramatic conventions of different times and locales. Yuan song poems (*sanqu* [chap. 16]) are one of the best known *qu* subgenres.

## ORAL AND LITERATI TRADITIONS

The evolution of the major poetic genres and subgenres is an intriguing tale of sustained interaction between the oral folk tradition and the literati tradition, or, in the parlance of modern literary criticism, between orality and literacy. We can speak of at least four major oralities: in the *shi* and *sao* poetry of pre-Han times, in Han *yuefu* poetry, in the *ci* poetry of the Late Tang and the early Song, and in Yuan *qu* poetry. Each of these four oralities is marked by a new genre or subgenre of oral folk origins having taken center stage in the established literary arena. In each case, literati poets enthusiastically collected, preserved, and polished folk songs, often having them performed at the court or in literati gatherings. At the same time, the literati spared no effort in imitating these songs—both their unadorned language and their music-based meters—in their own works. Often, they vied with one another in adapting music-based meters or in refashioning existent semantic rhythms to fit musical tunes. It is from this deep, wholehearted engagement with oral folk tradition that the five major genres of Chinese poetry were born.

As a rule, the development of a Chinese poetic genre consisted of a long process of imitating, assimilating, and eventually transforming an oral tradition into a purely literary one by the literati. This steady movement from orality to literacy was marked by the gradual disappearance of oral performance, the allegorical appropriation of folk themes, the abandonment of simple language for elegant diction, and the excessive use of allusion. If we trace the development from Han *yuefu* (chap. 4) to Late Tang regulated verse (chap. 9), or from the early short *ci* (chap. 12) to the late long *ci* poems on objects (chap. 15), we can perceive a clear *intra*-generic trajectory from orality to literacy. Interestingly, an obsessive pursuit of textuality (diction) and intertextuality (allusions) often marks the last great glory of a thoroughly “literatified” (*wenren hua*) genre and heralds the rapid ascendancy of a new genre of oral folk origin. The blossoming of *ci* poetry in the Song and *qu* poetry in the Yuan epitomizes such an *inter*-generic shift from literacy to orality.

We may conceive of orality and literacy as opposing yet complementary poles of Chinese poetic creativity. The sustained interaction between the two acted like a yin-yang dynamic. While orality is a fount of creative energy to be tapped again and again, literacy is what brings the rich potential of orality to its fullest realization. The waxing and waning of orality and literacy is not a nonprogressive cycle but a dynamic forward movement. Given the pivotal importance of orality in renewing Chinese poetic traditions, it is not surprising that some advocates of a radical cultural revolution in the early twentieth century turned to oral traditions—from the airs of the *Book of Poetry* to the living oral traditions of Chinese ethnic minorities—to find inspiration for their poetical revolution.

## PROSODY

Listening to the sound recording of selected poems, we shall take note of a few prominent features of Chinese prosody. First of all, Chinese rhyme is simpler than English rhyme. Whereas English rhyme requires a matching of vowels and succeeding consonants of accented syllables (for example, “pan” and “can”), Chinese rhyme often involves the matching of vowels only. There are far fewer ending consonants in Chinese than in English: *n* and *ng* in Chinese of all periods and unaspirated *p*, *t*, and *k* for entering tones in ancient and medieval Chinese. Rhyme in Chinese does not necessarily require the matching of identical vowels; sometimes vowels of similar phonetic value suffice.

End rhyme is the most important rhyme in Chinese poetry, as in English poetry. The rhyming scheme varies considerably from genre to genre. *Shi*, *sao*, and *fu* poems usually rhyme on even-number lines, and often the same rhyme is employed for most, if not all, of a poem (probably owing to an abundance of homonyms). In tonally regulated *shi* poetry, rhyme does not change and is required to be in level tone. In the *ci* and *qu* genres, however, rhyme sometimes changes two or more times in a poem (C12.7) and occurs with less predictable frequency—sometimes in almost every line (C12.6), other times at extended intervals (C14.3). Moreover, rhyme can be in level or oblique tone or in both (C12.2, C14.1, and C16.8, respectively). All these rhyming features represent a radical break from the entrenched rhyming habit and may be attributed to the influence of new music from Central Asia.

Chinese tonal meter operates through an ordered alternation of two

broad tonal categories—level and oblique tones—within lines of a prescribed number of syllables or characters, and it is therefore regarded by some as “tonal-syllabic.” Level tones include the first two tones of modern Chinese; the oblique tones consist of the third and fourth tones of modern Chinese plus the entering tone of medieval Chinese. The complex rules for tonal alternation in recent-style *shi*, *ci*, and *qu* poetry are explained in detail in individual chapters ([chaps. 8, 12, 13, and 16](#)).

To take tonal meter as the defining feature of Chinese prosody, however, would be a mistake. Tonally regulated poetry did not firmly establish itself until the Early Tang, about a millennium after the *Book of Poetry*. And even as it gained prestige and popularity in later dynasties, its predecessor, tonally unregulated ancient-style poetry, continued to flourish. To talk about Chinese prosody merely in terms of rhyme and tonal meter, then, would exclude the greater part of Chinese poetry.

For a complete picture of Chinese prosody, we need to consider what we may call semantic rhythm, which is based on a pattern of predictable pauses between syntactic units within a line of verse. Although English also alternates articulation and silence, this alternation does not represent an established poetic rhythm because English words are composed of a variable number of syllables, making pauses between words unpredictable. In Chinese poetry, however, semantic rhythm is of paramount importance. Chinese characters are all monosyllabic. In a sentence, a character functions either independently as a simple word or as part of a two-character compound, called a binome. Hence a typical Chinese poetic line exhibits a predictable semantic rhythm, characterized by various possible combinations of 1 and 2. Thanks to the consistent predictability of such syntactic breaks, each major poetic genre and subgenre exhibits one or more established semantic rhythms of its own. All these poetic rhythms are ingrained—probably more deeply than any explicit prosodic rules—in the consciousness of poets and readers alike. This makes possible not only an intensified experience of the sound, but also a dynamic creation (re-creation) of the sense of the poetry. The pivotal importance of semantic rhythm to the sound and sense of Chinese poetry will be discussed in greater detail in the concluding chapter.

## STRUCTURE

Reading through the 143 poems in this anthology reveals the two

competing yet complementary structural principles of Chinese poetry: the temporal-logical and the analogical-associational. The temporal-logical structural principle is conspicuously employed in the great odes and hymns of the *Book of Poetry* and is referred to as the *fu* mode in traditional Chinese criticism. In the *Book of Poetry*, the *fu* mode exhibits an extended narrative or descriptive continuum that spans large sections of a poem, if not the whole. Accounts of events and things are quite neatly arranged in such a narrative or descriptive continuum (C1.14). So it is no accident that *fu* later became the name of a new poetic genre—rhapsodies—particularly known for its grandiose narrative/descriptive scheme. Rhapsodic structure tends to be temporal-logical where events are recounted and spatiotemporal-logical where objects and places are exhaustively described (C3.1). The vigorous operation of *fu* as a principle of global structuring not only is conspicuous in the genre that bears its name, but also is clearly visible in *yuefu* poetry, *fu*'s immediate descendant, and in *ci* poetry, arguably its distant descendant. Many of the *yuefu* and *ci* poems in this anthology (chaps. 4, 13, and 14) exhibit a sustained temporal-logical *fu* structure.

The analogical-associational structural principle figures even more prominently in the *Book of Poetry*, especially in its airs. Frequently in this collection, we come across a bipartite structural block: two lines of natural description and two or more lines of emotional expression, brought together purely on an analogical-associational basis. In traditional Chinese literary criticism, this bipartite combination of line clusters is called *bi-xing* or sometimes *bi* (analogical mode) and *xing* (associational mode) separately. Unlike its companion term *fu*, *bi-xing* did not evolve into the name of a genre, nor was it broadened to denote a principle of global structuring. When traditional Chinese critics employ this term, they are merely thinking of a bipartite combination of disparate line clusters.

In my view, the term *bi-xing* can be fruitfully reconceptualized to describe the customary bipartite combination of natural scenes (*jing*) and emotional expressions (*qing*) in Chinese poetry. A survey of the 143 poems reveals more often than not such a bipartite nature–emotion combination. In *shi* poems, the two parts are usually quite balanced in length and intended to enhance each other as analogues or correlatives. Such a bipartite structure seems to be modeled on the old *bi-xing* formula, even though the two parts are less forcibly yoked together. In any event, this bipartite structure signifies a transformation of *bi-xing* into a global structural principle (C5.6). In *ci* and *qu* poems, the nature–

emotion combination is often radically reconfigured. A *shi*-like balance in some poems contrasts with a deliberate, dramatic dissymmetry between the two aspects in others. In one poem, we might see natural description kept to a minimum, while emotional expression fills out the remainder of the poem (C13.4). In another, we might observe a preponderance of natural images, with emotional expression reduced to one or two lines (C16.3). Such an asymmetrical combination of natural images and emotions may nonetheless be characterized as a *bi-xing* structure, although a much mutated one.

If we plot the *fu* and *bi-xing* structures on two perpendicular axes, we shall find that relatively few poems in this anthology are strictly aligned with a single axis. The majority can be seen to lie somewhere between the two. As a rule, poems of a global *fu* structure also tend to contain analogical-associational blocks within them. This is especially true of works composed by lyrically inclined poets. Qu Yuan's "On Encountering Trouble" (C2.3) is perhaps the earliest famous example of this kind of admixture. Conversely, a poem of a global *bi-xing* structure usually features mini-sequences of narration or description, sometimes smoothly blended together and sometimes with abrupt breaks between them (C5.1–7).



Having highlighted the major aspects of Chinese poetry, I shall stop here and let readers begin their own journey of discovery in the great world of Chinese poetry.

Zong-qi Cai

#### NOTE

1. *Sao*-style poems composed after the Han are more often than not subsumed under the *fu* genre and given the name *sao*-style *fu* (*sao ti fu*).



## **PART 1**

# **Pre-Qin Times**



## Tetrasyllabic *Shi* Poetry

### *The Book of Poetry (Shijing)*

The ***Shijing*** (*The Book of Poetry*) is the fountainhead of Chinese poetry. The three hundred-odd poems that make up this anthology are the earliest extant Chinese verse. The edition used today was compiled by a certain Master Mao during the Han dynasty; thus it has become a convention to refer to the poems by their titles and their Mao numbers (1–305). The poems are divided into three sections (sometimes considered three subgenres), given here in their presumed chronological order: *song* (hymns, laudes [Mao nos. 266–305]), *ya* (elegantiae or odes, subdivided into greater and lesser *ya* [Mao nos. 235–265, 161–234]), and *feng* (airs [Mao nos. 1–160]). There are three subsections of hymns: those of the state of Lu (from the late Spring and Autumn era), those of the Zhou court (the earliest poems dating from the early Western Zhou), and the pieces imitating those of the preceding Shang dynasty (written in the late Western Zhou period). The greater elegantiae are concerned with the Zhou kingdom and its conquest of the Shang, and the lesser elegantiae are often connected to the various regional courts of the states under Zhou control. The airs, sometimes referred to as the “airs of the states” (*guo feng*), are broken into fifteen sections, thirteen ascribed to northern states or places and two purported to be collections of songs (referred to as *nan* [southern songs]) of the southern regions under Zhou rule. These poems treat a broad range of subjects and themes, from dynastic songs of cultural heroes to paeans of battles or warriors, court rituals or sacrifice, hunts and feasts. More than half the poems, most found in the “airs of the states” section, are love poems, long considered by most readers to be the most interesting texts. They are thus the primary focus



of this chapter. Regardless of a poem's subject, however, three basic modes of presentation have been identified by scholars: *fu* (exposition), *bi* (comparison), and *xing* (affective image). Although we have little evidence concerning the conditions of composition, it seems clear from the poems themselves that the hymns and elegantiae were probably composed at court, while the airs were originally folk songs that were standardized (in terms of prosody as well as content) for presentation at court.

These folk songs were composed in a social setting that predated Confucian mores. Thus liaisons between unmarried young men and women were not only allowed but encouraged (as the *Zhou li* [*Zhou Ritual*] tells us). This, in turn, resulted in many love affairs that ended in disappointment and despair, especially for the young women involved. Many of the airs are complaints apparently sung by these abandoned lovers.

Some of the prosody of these songs may have been the creation of these young men and women themselves, perhaps in part determined by popular tunes associated with certain affective images (*xing*); "on the mountains there is X," for example, was usually employed in songs about separation. But the standards in this regard were no doubt established by the court musicians who helped shape these songs before they took their final form in the late sixth century B.C.E. It is possible that the three thousand poems Confucius was supposed to have examined before selecting the three hundred for this class were largely different versions of the same poems, distinguished by region or era.

The standards refined by the court musicians include a four-word line, the four-line stanza, various formulae, a general 2 + 2 rhythm, rhymes on even lines, and the use of various tropes, including metaphor, simile, synecdoche, puns, onomatopoeia, rhyming and reduplicative compounds, alliteration, and puns. Parallelism, especially in stock phrases such as "on the mountains there is X, / in the lowlands there is Y," is common (for this particular pattern, see Mao nos. 38, 84, 115, 132, 172, and 204). Although there are no fixed syntactic rules, the pattern of topic + comment discerned by many in later Chinese verse is also evident in the *Book of Poetry*: "Tao yao" (The Peach Tree Tender [Mao no. 6]) begins, "The peach tree budding and tender," and "Zai qu" (Driving the Carriage Horses) opens, "They drove on the carriage horses, clippedly clop." Finally, it has been argued that there may originally have been some significance to the sequence of these three hundred-plus poems. Whether such significance existed or can be seen in the extant

text is difficult to determine. Yet it is clear that reading one poem in the context of another, often contiguous text proves useful.



I present in this chapter examples from each of the three sections of the *Book of Poetry*. Although lines from these poems were employed early on by speakers to make a political point and this line of interpretation developed into an identification between the poems and early historical contexts, for the most part I will focus on literary interpretations.

These interpretations, although directed by commentators old and new and informed by parallel poems in the *Book of Poetry*, represent only one of a number of possible readings. Unlike early Greek verse genres, which were defined by musical accompaniment (lyric), subject matter (iambus), or meter (elegy), the “airs,” “elegantiae,” and “hymns” are labels that are less definitive. Even the origins of the poems in this anthology are still debated, with some scholars denying their oral provenance. Much has been left to the imagination of the modern reader of the *Book of Poetry*. Thus when we see a dance or a courtship rite in a particular poem—reflecting an ongoing folk tradition with similarities to that which produced “mountain songs” (*shan ge*) in later eras—other modern readers may prefer other readings. Such is part of the greatness of this collection.

Many of the texts, especially the love songs, need little interpretation. Yet through centuries of oral and written transmission of these three hundred songs, lines and even whole stanzas have been rearranged or lost. The situation admittedly is not as serious as with the Greek poetic fragments of the same period, where we find puzzling little snippets such as Archilochus’s (ca. 680–ca. 650 B.C.E.) fragment no. 107:

I hope that the Dog Star  
will wither many of them  
with his piercing rays.<sup>1</sup>

Who “many of them” refers to is unclear, but the clarity of the poet’s enmity for them allows this poem to resonate even with modern readers. Alkman’s (seventh century B.C.E.?) fragment no. 82 is similar:

The girls sank down,  
helplessly,  
like birds beneath

a hovering hawk.<sup>2</sup>

What is the context here? Although without more of the poem or a commentary it remains difficult to say, the sinister image of the hovering hawk and the vulnerability of young girls lying helpless appeal to us across time. Many of the poems collected in the *Book of Poetry* also lack contexts and have puzzled readers. One such song is “Zhu lin” (The Grove at Zhu [Mao no. 144]):<sup>3</sup>

### C1.1

The Grove at Zhu		株林	(zhū lín)
	“Why are you in Zhu Grove?”	胡為乎株林	(hú wéi hu zhū lín)
2	Have you followed after Xia Nan?”	從夏南	(cóng xià nán)
	“I have not gone to Zhu Grove,	匪適株林	(fěi shì zhū lín)
4	To follow after Xia Nan.”	從夏南	(cóng xià nán)
	“I drove my team of four horses,	駕我乘馬	(jià wǒ shèng mǎ)
6	I rested in the outskirts of Zhu;	說于株野	(shuì yú zhū yě)
	I teamed my four colts,	乘我乘駒	(chéng wǒ shèng jū)
8	And breakfasted in Zhu.”	朝食于株	(zhāo shí yú zhū)

[MSZJ 1.16b–17a]

As with the pieces by Archilochus and Alkman, the reader seeks a context for this song. Although the poem could be simply a love song about an anxious suitor, the references to the historical figure Xia Nan have caused most readers to identify the context of this poem with the affair between Duke Ling of Chen (r. 613–599 B.C.E.) and Xia Nan’s mother, as portrayed in the early Chinese historical text **Zuo zhuan** (*Zuo Commentary on the “Spring and Autumn Annals”*). There we learn that after continuing to see Xia Nan’s mother for some time, the duke insulted Xia Nan while they were drinking together. After the feast was finished, Xia Nan shot and killed Duke Ling with an arrow. The song was written, it is said, to satirize Duke Ling’s improper behavior. It is the duke who drove to Zhu. His impatience—he seems to have driven all night—as well as the erotic associations of the groves (where romantic liaisons were common), the racing colts, and even eating (breakfast) only heighten his impropriety even as he tries to excuse it. The demotic style and run-on

lines of the final stanza, which allow the lines to be read quickly, suggest the duke's urgency and his base nature.

As fascinating as this kind of interpretation may be, most of the great poems of the *Book of Poetry* either provide their own historical background or need no contextualization, as we can see in "Tao yao" (The Peach Tree Tender [Mao no. 6]):

## C1.2

The Peach Tree Tender		
	桃夭	(táo yāo)
The peach tree budding and tender,	桃之夭夭	(táo zhī yāo yāo)
2 Vivid and bright its flowers.	灼灼其華	(zhuó zhuó qí huá)
This girl is going to be married,	之子于歸	(zhī zǐ yú guī)
4 And fit for her chamber and house.	宜其室家	(yí qí shì jiā)
The peach tree budding and tender,	桃之夭夭	(táo zhī yāo yāo)
6 Quite large its fruit.	有蕢其實	(yǒu fén qí shí)
This girl is going to be married,	之子于歸	(zhī zǐ yú guī)
8 And fit for her house and chamber.	宜其家室	(yí qí jiāshì)
The peach tree budding and tender,	桃之夭夭	(táo zhī yāo yāo)
10 Its leaves luxuriant and lush.	其葉蓁蓁	(qí yè zhēn zhēn)
This girl is going to be married,	之子于歸	(zhī zǐ yú guī)
12 And fits with all in the family.	宜其家人	(yí qí jiā rén)

[MSZJ 1.6b–7a]

This epithalamium is built around the comparison (*bǐ*) between the bride and the peach tree: she is also budding and tender, vivid and bright. The peach itself has associations in traditional China with female fertility, but here the emphasis is on the bride's suitability for the husband and his entire family, with whom she is going to live. The flowers refer to her beautiful face, which will appeal to her husband in their bedchamber—thus the precedence given to chamber over house in the last line of the first stanza. In the second stanza, the implication is that her body will be capable of producing many sons, the main concern of her parents-in-law, who are represented synecdochically here by their house. By the third stanza, the emphasis has moved from the flowers and the fruit to the

leaves of the peach tree, suggesting the passing of seasons from spring to fall (similar to “Meng” [Common Fellow, Mao no. 58] or “Biao you mei” [Falling Plums, Mao no. 20]). The abundance of leaves, and the slightly revised structure of line 10 (here the adjectival reduplicative “luxuriant and lush” follows the noun “leaves”) suggests the children this bride will produce for the family. The lush leaves may also foreshadow a good relationship for the couple, as they do (by contrast) in “Di du” (The Russet Pear [Mao no. 119]) and in the subsequent poem by the same title (no. 169). The rhythm (tetrameter) and rhyme scheme (*xaxa / xbx b / xcxc*) are also perfectly regular, underlining the theme of the poem expressed in the final line: the bride will fit “with all in the family.” This balance is structurally built into the poem, as in the couplet “The peach tree budding and tender, / Vivid and bright its flowers.”

A similar poem is “Xi sang” (Mulberries in the Lowlands [Mao no. 228]):

### C1.3

Mulberries in the Lowlands		隰桑 (xí sāng)
2	Lovely are many mulberries in the lowlands,	隰桑有阿 (xí sāng yǒu ē)
	Their leaves are flourishing.	其葉有難 (qí yè yǒu nuó)
	Now I have seen my lord,	既見君子 (jì jiàn jūn zǐ)
4	How great is my pleasure!	其樂如何 (qí lè rú hé)
6	Lovely are many mulberries in the lowlands,	隰桑有阿 (xí sāng yǒu ē)
	Their leaves are tender,	其葉有沃 (qí yè yǒu wò)
	Now I have seen my lord,	既見君子 (jì jiàn jūn zǐ)
8	How could I not feel pleasure?	云何不樂 (yún hé bú lè)
10	Lovely are many mulberries in the lowlands,	隰桑有阿 (xí sāng yǒu ē)
	Their leaves are dark.	其葉有幽 (qí yè yǒu yōu)
	Now I have seen my lord,	既見君子 (jì jiàn jūn zǐ)
12	His charismatic reputation is very firm.	德音孔膠 (dé yīn kǒng jiāo)
14	In my heart I cherish him,	心乎愛矣 (xīn hu ài yǐ)
	Why should I not say it?	遐不謂矣 (xiá bú wèi yǐ)
	In the core of my heart I treasure him,	中心藏之 (zhōng xīn cáng zhī)
16	When could I ever forget him?	何日忘之 (hé rì wàng zhī)

[MSZJ 15.8a–b]

Although the visual images of the mulberry tree and its leaves are similar

to those seen in “Tao yao,” here the persona may be seen either as a subject who admires his lord greatly *or* as a young woman praising her intended. This ambiguity of this pair (subject to lord or female to male lover) is one commonly seen in later Chinese verse and turns on the term *junzi*, which means literally “lord” but can also be used to refer to a “lordly man”—that is, a husband, a lover, or someone the persona admires greatly. Indeed, interpretation of similar poems centering on a persona’s praise for a *junzi* often differs from one subgenre to another: poems in the *ya* sections (elegantiae) read as referring to the “lord” (compare the fifth stanza of “Chu ju” [The Carts Come Out, Mao no. 168] or “Lu xiao” [Tall Is the Southernwood, Mao no. 173]), in contrast to those in the *feng* section (airs) that are read as love poems in which *junzi* is interpreted as “lordly man” (“Cao chong” [Insects in the Grass, Mao no. 14], for example). In “Mulberries in the Lowlands” both meanings may apply.

In addition to marriage in “Tao yao” and the more informal ties between the persona and her “lordly man” in “Xi sang,” we also find more direct depictions of courting in the *Book of Poetry*, as in the following poem, “Qiang Zhong Zi” (I Beg of You, Zhong Zi [Mao no. 76]), the second poem in the state of Zheng section and among the best known of these three hundred verses:

#### **C1.4**

<b>I Beg of You, Zhong Zi</b>		將仲子	(qiāng zhòng zǐ)
	I beg of you, Zhong Zi,	將仲子兮	(qiāng zhòng zǐ xī)
2	Don't cross into my hamlet.	無踰我里	(wú yú wǒ lǐ)
	Don't break my planted willows,	無折我樹杞	(wú zhé wǒ shù qǐ)
4	Could I care so much for them?	豈敢愛之	(qǐ gǎn ài zhī)
	It's father and mother I dread.	畏我父母	(wèi wǒ fù mǔ)
6	Zhong, you're embraceable . . .	仲可懷也	(zhòng kě huái yě)
	But the talk of my father and mother is	父母之言	(fù mǔ zhī yán)
8	Indeed something dreadful.	亦可畏也	(yì kě wèi yě)
		將仲子兮	(qiāng zhòng zǐ xī)
10	Don't climb over my wall.	無踰我牆	(wú yú wǒ qiáng)
	Don't break my planted mulberries.	無折我樹桑	(wú zhé wǒ shù sāng)
12	Could I care so much for them?	豈敢愛之	(qǐ gǎn ài zhī)
	It's all my brothers I dread.	畏我諸兄	(wèi wǒ zhū xiōng)
14	Zhong, you're embraceable . . .	仲可懷也	(zhòng kě huái yě)
	But the talk of all my brothers is	諸兄之言	(zhū xiōng zhī yán)
16	Indeed something dreadful.	亦可畏也	(yì kě wèi yě)
		將仲子兮	(qiāng zhòng zǐ xī)
18	Don't leap into my garden.	無踰我園	(wú yú wǒ yuán)
	Don't break my planted hardwoods.	無折我樹檀	(wú zhé wǒ shù tán)
20	Could I care so much for them?	豈敢愛之	(qǐ gǎn ài zhī)
	I dread others will talk too much,	畏人之多言	(wèi rén zhī duō yán)
22	Zhong, you're embraceable . . .	仲可懷也	(zhòng kě huái yě)
	But others' talking too much is	人之多言	(rén zhī duō yán)
24	Indeed something dreadful.	亦可畏也	(yì kě wèi yě)

[MSZJ 4.8a–9a]

Whereas joyous anticipation dominated the poems examined earlier, this is a poem of anticipation and anxiety. Although the persona may secretly welcome her lover's approach, she is concerned about the reaction of her family and her village to her love affair. Zhong Zi (Second Son), whom we assume to be the singer's paramour, is warned in lines 1–3 of the first stanza to keep his distance, but as the persona tries to explain to him (and perhaps to herself) why she is putting him off (lines 4–8), Zhong Zi takes advantage to come nearer, so that by line 2 of the second stanza he has progressed from the edge of the hamlet to the wall around her home.

The images in these first lines are of transgression (crossing and breaking), reinforced by the sharp consonantal endings (-eg in reconstructed ancient pronunciation) of the rhymes in lines 1–5 and 7. It is as if the singer is so focused on explaining her motives to hold off her lover that she forgets to vary the rhyme. If we could imagine a performance of this poem, there would be the potential for the singer to elongate the final syllables in lines 1 (a vowel-ending participle), 6, and 8 (both -er rhymes followed by vowel-ending participles). The contrast of these lengthy final syllables to the preceding staccato, consonant-rhymed lines suggest Zhong Zi's halting (on the syllables ending in stops), then gliding to gain increasing proximity toward his beloved in the held-vowel endings. This effect might be enhanced by the singer's perspective: her eyes look out over the entire hamlet in lines 1–3, then seem to turn to glance toward her family in lines 5–8. The performer might even choreograph her movements to suggest this change in point of view, first facing the audience, then slowly half turning her back on them in the final lines of the stanza.

Yet this is all very cerebral. The singer does not tell us what she sees, and we readers (or original listeners) can put the scene together only indirectly from her admonitions to Zhong Zi: in the distance, the hamlet wall and willows; closer, the wall around her family compound and the mulberries; and, finally, in the foreground, the hardwood trees on the border of the family garden.

The second stanza begins, as noted, with Zhong Zi now at the wall surrounding her home. Traditional commentators make much of the significance of the three trees the reader encounters, but the images' intended effect may be simply to suggest Zhong Zi's ardor, since the trees that are closer to the persona are larger and more of a barrier: from supple willow to denser mulberry to hardwood. As the distance between Zhong Zi and the singer is narrowed, the effect of his visit widens, going beyond the parents (of the first stanza) to include all the singer's brothers in the second stanza. The rhyme incidence (or frequency) is still heavy, restricting the action and thereby maintaining the suspense: Will Zhong Zi reach the singer or not? By moving from the monotonous rhyme scheme (*aaaxbxb*) in the first stanza to a slightly more lively one in the second (*xccxcxbxb*), the intended effect may be to suggest an end to the singer's repetitive reverie.

The third stanza brings Zhong Zi yet closer to the persona (and the reader). Perhaps since we can see him only through his lover's eyes,



there is no physical description of Zhong Zi. Of more importance is his increasing proximity, not his appearance. Rather than a marriage partner, as in “Tao yao,” here we have an aggressive suitor whose sexuality is the main concern. Now he is perhaps only a few feet away from the singer. In this scenario, she speaks no more of family (father, mother, or brothers), who might want to protect her from such a liaison, but of the neighbors, who will want to gossip about her. Through this change of emphasis from family to outsiders, she suggests that the “embraceable” Zhong Zi is sure to live up to his epithet. They will become the couple Mengzi (*Mengzi*, 3B.3) decries who “climb walls to be with each other” and thus will be despised by their parents and the people of their state. Their lovemaking seems inevitable. The trees are not luxuriant and colorful, as in “Tao yao,” but in danger of being damaged, as is the persona.

This kind of progression in the *Book of Poetry* has come to be called **incremental repetition**. In “I Beg of You, Zhong Zi,” there are two such repetitions: Zhong Zi physically crashing through barriers and tree branches to reach his beloved, juxtaposed to the singer’s widening mental picture of those who will object to his wooing. The result is a chiasmatic (the inversion of word order of similar phrases in an *a-b-b-a* pattern) tension: Zhong Zi approaching in increments, and the effects thereof distancing themselves beyond the singer’s control—or so she imagines it, her emotions crossing in parallel to the chiasmatic repetitions in her song.

If we assume that, as with any oral song, this one would have been performed differently each time it was sung, we can also imagine that there may have been much longer versions of “I Beg of You, Zhong Zi,” in which Zhong Zi might have forded small streams or stepped through thresholds. Moreover, we can imagine the singer redesigning the imagistic furniture (what was jumped or crossed and the breakable foliage one had to be careful with) to fit local conditions and audiences.

Any discussion of “I Beg of You, Zhong Zi” would be incomplete without some comparison with “Ru fen” (The Banks of the Ru [Mao no. 10]), which also invokes the awe and respect most young lovers showed their parents:

## C1.5

The Banks of the Ru		汝墳	(rǔ fén)
	Walking along the banks of the Ru,	遵彼汝墳	(zūn bǐ rǔ fén)
2	Cutting the slender stems;	伐其條枚	(fá qí tiáo méi)
	Not yet seeing my lord,	未見君子	(wèi jiàn jūn zǐ)
4	My desire is like morning hunger.	惄如調飢	(nì rú zhāo jī)
	Walking along the banks of the Ru,	遵彼汝墳	(zūn bǐ rǔ fén)
6	Cutting the slender sprouts;	伐其條肄	(fá qí tiáo yì)
	Having seen my lord,	既見君子	(jì jiàn jūn zǐ)
8	He did not desert me after all.	不我遐棄	(bù wǒ xiá qì)
	The bream has a reddened tail,	魴魚頰尾	(fáng yú chéng wěi)
10	The royal chamber as if ablaze.	王室如燬	(wáng shì rú huǐ)
	But even though it is as if ablaze,	雖則如燬	(suī zé rú huǐ)
12	Father and mother are very near.	父母孔邇	(fù mǔ kǒng ěr)

[MSZJ 1.8b.–9b]

“Ru fen” has traditionally been read with the final couplet developing from the *xing* of the reddened bream in line 9. *Wang shi*, which is here rendered literally as “royal chamber,” is normally understood *pars pro toto* (a part for the whole) as referring to the royal court, which is “as if ablaze” in some sort of crisis. The final two lines are then read as the wife urging her husband, who is serving at court, to return home because of his parents (which would mean he would also return to her). There is another line of commentary that reads the poem in just the opposite way, of urging her husband to serve an oppressive court so that his parents could be well cared for. But as an air, the poem might easily be read as a love poem sung by a wife whose husband has been away serving the state but who has now returned. This would fit the gathering-plant imagery of lines 1–2 and 5–6, which is often associated with male–female relations. The image of the bream with the reddened tail in line 9, however, is problematic in either reading. Wen Yiduo (1899–1946) has argued that fish are symbols of lovers in the *Book of Poetry*. Thus the lover in this poem would be ardent after such a long absence from his wife. Hunger (line 4), too, is often equated with sexual desire in these poems. Although there have also been erotic readings of this poem by modern Western scholars, Wen Yiduo’s interpretation of *wang shi* as referring metonymically to a member of the royal court (as a parallel to two other expressions referring to courtiers, *zong shi* and *wang sun*)

seems most reasonable. Lines 10–12 would then read:

The royal courtier as if ablaze;  
Even though he is as if ablaze,  
Father and mother are very near.

In support of Wen's overall reading of the poem, the following roughly contemporaneous Egyptian love song (thirteenth or fourteenth century B.C.E.) might be cited:

Love, how I'd love to slip down to the pond,  
bathe with you close by on the bank.  
Just for you I'd wear my new Memphis swimsuit,  
made of sheer linen, fit for a queen—  
Come and see how it looks in the water!

Couldn't I coax you to wade in with me?  
Let the cool creep slowly around us?  
Then I'd dive deep down  
and come up with you dripping,  
Let you fill your eyes  
with the little red fish that I'd catch.

And I'd say, standing there tall in the shallows:  
Look at my fish, love,  
how it lies in my hand.  
How my fingers caress it,  
slip down its sides ...  
But then I'd say softer,  
eyes bright with your seeing:  
A gift, love, no words.  
Come closer and  
look, it's all me.<sup>4</sup>

Men are not always portrayed as aggressive, as in "I Beg of You, Zhong Zi," or as long-absent courtiers, as in "Ru fen." Sometimes they can only stand and wait for their partners, as does the young man who is the persona in "Jing nü" (The Retiring Girl [Mao no. 42]):

## C1.6

### The Retiring Girl

	The retiring girl, lovely	靜女	(jìng nǚ)
2	Was to wait for me at this corner of the wall.	靜女其姝	(jìng nǚ qí shū)
	But she hides and will not show herself	俟我於城隅	(sì wǒ yú chéng yú)
4	As I scratch my head, pace up and down.	愛而不見	(ài ěr bú jiàn)
		搔首踟躕	(sāo shǒu chí chú)
	The retiring girl, fine,	靜女其變	(jìng nǚ qí luán)
6	Gave me a vermilion stalk.	貽我彤管	(yí wǒ tóng guǎn)
	The vermilion stalk is so red	彤管有煒	(tóng guǎn yǒu wěi)
8	I delight, am cheered by the girl's beauty.	說懌女美	(yuè yì nǚ měi)
	From the pastures she brought me a reed sprout,	自牧歸荇	(zì mù guī tí)
10	Truly beautiful and remarkable.	洵美且異	(xún měi qǐ yì)
	"It is not that you, sprout, are beautiful—	匪女之為美	(fěi nǚ zhī wéi měi)
12	A beautiful girl made you my gift."	美人之貽	(měi rén zhī yí)

[MSZJ 2.15b–16b]

"The Retiring Girl" is a poem that shows us only a few minutes of a relationship in real time, but it suggests much more. The first stanza provides an exposition of sorts: we hear of the two characters, their relationship (at least to some degree), and their location, and we are allowed to wait with the young man for the girl to show herself. With him, we look toward the corner of the wall, where he seems to know she is (since he seems certain that she is hiding there). She is reticent to meet him, even in this out-of-the-way place (the corner of the city wall). Of course, she is depicted as a "retiring" or "quiet girl," but the third stanza suggests they may already be lovers and her hiding may be simply playful. The final line of the first stanza, "As I scratch my head, pace up and down," slows the action (three of the first four lines rhyme [aaxa] enhancing this stasis) and serves as a background for the persona's musings that follow in the second and third stanzas. The reader joins the young man in looking inward. Without the quiet girl present, the man's thoughts wander back, in the second stanza, to the last time he has seen her. He examines a bright-red stalk that the girl had given him then. The vivid color of this natural object in his hand symbolizes the girl's loveliness and begins to bring her alive for the reader as well. The changed rhymed scheme in this stanza (bbcc) underlines the parallel between gift and girl.

In the third stanza, the persona flashes back to another gift—a reed sprout that his love brought him from the pasture, perhaps the site of a previous rendezvous. At this point, the reader is well prepared for a second comparison of the love token to the lover. This time the token is a small reed sprout. The mundane nature of this token—not even brightly colored—makes it clear that the repeated use of the adjective “beautiful” (*mei*) in the final five lines (it is used four times!) implicitly refers to the girl. Twice *mei* is the stressed rhyme word in these final lines, linking the persona’s reveries in the resulting *cc / cdcd* pattern. In the final couplet, the young man’s impatience for his beloved leads him to address the reed sprout directly. This rhetorical device, known as apostrophe, is yet another thread between the three beautiful “objects” that weave the stanzas together: girl, stalk, and sprout. Read in this fashion, the poem begins as an exposition (*fu*) in the first stanza but comes to end unresolved in a series of comparisons (*bi*). The circularity of the young man’s thoughts, as well as the metaphoric binding of gifts and girl, are highlighted by another rhetorical device, the linking of lines 6 and 7 through the repetition of “vermillion stalk” and the doubled “beautiful” that links line 11 to line 12 (a device known in Chinese as *lianzhu* [linking pearls] and in English as anadiplosis).

Although the poems presented earlier should suggest that tetrameter is the standard rhythm for the *Book of Poetry* as a whole (over 91 percent of the lines are in tetrameter, about 6 percent in pentameter, and most of the remaining 3 percent in trimeter), there are also a few poems written in lines of varying length, such as “Jiang you si” (The River Has Branches [Mao no. 22]) in trimeter or “Xing lu” (Treading Frost [Mao no. 17]) in pentameter. “Xing lu” is a bit different. There are seven tetrasyllabic lines in this piece. Strictly speaking, there is not a single pentasyllabic poem in the *Book of Poetry*, while “Jiang you si” is obviously a trisyllabic poem. Both songs are found in the second section of the airs, “Shao nan” (*Nan-Type Songs from the States Set Up by the Duke of Shao*), and it is likely that both this section and the paired “Zhou nan” (*Nan-Type Songs from the States Set Up by the Duke of Zhou*) had a musical base that differed from that of the other airs.<sup>5</sup> To us moderns, however, only the text remains:

## C1.7

<b>The River Has Branches</b>		江有汜	(jiāng yǒu sì)
	The River has branches that leave and return —	江有汜	(jiāng yǒu sì)
2	When this person returned home,	之子歸	(zhī zǐ guī)
	He did not take me,	不我以	(bù wǒ yǐ)
4	He did not take me,	不我以	(bù wǒ yǐ)
	And afterward he will regret it!	其後也悔	(qí hòu yě huǐ)
6	The River has channels 'tween its islets —	江有渚	(jiāng yǒu zhǔ)
	When this person returned home,	之子歸	(zhī zǐ guī)
8	He would not be close to me,	不我與	(bù wǒ yǔ)
	He would not be close to me,	不我與	(bù wǒ yǔ)
10	And afterward he will be troubled by it!	其後也處	(qí hòu yě chǔ)
	The River has the Tuo tributary —	江有沱	(jiāng yǒu tuó)
12	When this person returned home,	之子歸	(zhī zǐ guī)
	He did not stop by to see me,	不我過	(bù wǒ guò)
14	He did not stop by to see me,	不我過	(bù wǒ guò)
	His wailing will become my song.	其嘯也歌	(qí xiào yě gē)

[MSZJ 1.16b–17a]

Line 1 of this poem, along with its variants (lines 6 and 11), has been identified as a *xing*. It also functions as a comparison (*bì*), linking the lover, who is often absent, to the River (the ancient name of the Yangtze River), which has branches that wander off from the main channel. Perhaps the wayward lover is a merchant. Each stanza of the poem is in trimeter until the final line, which reverts to tetrameter. Yet even these final lines break on the particle *ye*, yielding a 3:1 rhythm, the final syllable constituting a kind of exclamation: “And afterward ... regret!” and so on. If the final lines are scanned so, in performing the poem there seems to be great potential for controlling the audience. The listeners would have empathized with the persona and hoped that her unfaithful mate would somehow be punished. If the singer stressed the *ye* (which, as a particle, would normally be unstressed), if he or she held this word longer before revealing to the audience the negative effects on the unfaithful lover, the power of the poetic justice would have increased with this suspense. The final line of the third stanza would thereby reveal the ultimate surprise: that the errant lover’s anguish would become the plot for a song—this song. Although the emotions weigh down the reader, the effect of rhyming nearly every line (*axaaa*, *bxbbb*, *cxccc*) lightens the mood and

prepares for the almost mocking closing line.

Structurally, there is here, too, a kind of incremental repetition. In the first stanza, although branches of the river depart from the main channel, they return. In contrast, the lover seems to have left for good. His initial emotion will be merely regret. In the second stanza, the many channels between the islets may suggest the lover's courting between more than one love interest. Because of this, he did not even try to soften his departure with a final rendezvous. This, the persona tells us, will cause him more anguish even than leaving her. Finally, in the last stanza, there is a suggestion that the river has joined with someone else (as the Tuo joins the River) and that he did not even stop by to see his former lover before leaving. As a result, his anguish will someday cause him to wail, a sorrow that the persona promises to put to song. The more he demonstrates his coldness toward her, the more she wants to believe he will eventually suffer. The force of this reading lies in the contrast between the reality of the first four lines of each stanza and the singer's fantasy in the final lines.

This poem has also been interpreted as the lament of a young female relative of a bride who has left the relative behind as the bride headed off to be married (line 2 of each stanza could also be read, "She has gone to be married," as in "Tao yao"). It was a common practice for a bride to take along several young women of her family, who became the husband's secondary wives or concubines. This reading comes no doubt in part because this poem immediately follows a related poem, "Xiao xing" (Little Stars [Mao no. 21]):

## **C1.8**

<b>Little Stars</b>	小星 (xiǎo xīng)
Faint are those little stars,	嚙彼小星 (huì bǐ xiǎo xīng)
2 Three and five of them in the east.	三五在東 (sān wǔ zài dōng)
Hurriedly mid the night we go,	肅肅宵征 (sù sù xiāo zhēng)
4 In morning and at night we are in the palace—	夙夜在公 (sù yè zài gōng)
Really people's lots are not the same!	寔命不同 (shí mìng bù tóng)
6 Faint are those little stars,	嚙彼小星 (huì bǐ xiǎo xīng)
Of Orion and the Pleiades.	維參與昴 (wéi shēn yǔ mǎo)
8 Hurriedly mid the night we go,	肅肅宵征 (sù sù xiāo zhēng)
Carrying our coverlets and sheets—	抱衾與裯 (bào qīn yǔ chóu)
10 Really people's lots are not similar!	寔命不猶 (shí mìng bù yóu)

[MSZJ 1.16a–b]

The *xing* (affective image) that opens this poem is also a *bi* (comparison), linking the stars to lower-ranking palace women. In the growing light of dawn—which may symbolize the waking of the ruler's favorite—these three and five “stars” grow ever fainter. Why not three or four stars? The answer is that these three and five stars are those in ancient Chinese constellations comparable with our Orion and the Pleiades, the stars that remain visible the longest in the winter's morning sky. This unusual trope allows the first stanza to link to the second, where the metaphor becomes clearer. The theme of this song is similar to the meaning of the ancient Chinese saying “The hungry sing of their food, the labored sing of their service.” The persona here laments her lower status, which makes it impossible for her to attend her lord for the entire night, as the main wife would. Thus she and her fellow court ladies hurry about. The image of these women with the coverlets and sheets draped on their shoulders suggests both the canopy of the sky (in the appearance of the women) and the hierarchy of the palace women themselves (seen in their hardship). The prosody of this poem is regular except for the “extra” fifth line in each stanza, perhaps lending emphasis to the plaint of the final lines, an emphasis heightened by the rhyme scheme *ababb*, *acacc*.

There is a second, relatively common reading of this poem that identifies the persona as a low-ranking courtier (a member of the *shi*, or petit nobility) who scurries to be on time for the dawn audience, his own star obscured by the higher-ranking grandees of the court. Indeed, many traditional poems have been interpreted variously as political or love



songs. Yet the coverlets and sheets argue of love here, and the entire poem bears some resemblance to Sappho's (late seventh–early sixth century B.C.E.) fragment no. 34:<sup>6</sup>

Stars around the lovely moon  
Hide their gleaming beauty away  
Whenever she at the full sheds  
Over the earth her radiant glow.

Although once again a Greek fragment offers us no context, the juxtaposition of some central female figure (the moon) to her subordinate women (the stars around her) is not unlike the situation in “Little Stars.” That such women could be seen to be “in the ruler’s service” is also apparent from “Cai fan” (Gathering the White Artemesia [Mao no. 13]):

### C1.9

Gathering the White Artemesia		采繁 (cǎi fán)
	Where do I gather the white artemesia?	于以采繁 (yú yǐ cǎi fán)
2	By the pond, by the islet.	于沼于沚 (yú zhǎo yú zhǐ)
	Whether do I use it?	于以用之 (yú yǐ yòng zhī)
4	In the service of the ruler.	公侯之事 (gōng hóu zhī shì)
	Where do I gather the white artemesia?	于以采繁 (yú yǐ cǎi fán)
6	All down the dale.	于澗之中 (yú jiàn zhī zhōng)
	Whether do I use it?	于以用之 (yú yǐ yòng zhī)
8	In the palace of the ruler.	公侯之宮 (gōng hóu zhī gōng)
	The glossy sheen of my hair knot,	被之僮僮 (bì zhī tóng tóng)
10	Morning and night I am in the ruler’s service.	夙夜在公 (sù yè zài gōng)
	In disheveled profusion the hair in my knot,	被之祁祁 (bì zhī qí qí)
12	As I hurriedly return.	薄言還歸 (bó yán huán guī)

[MSZJ 1.10b–11a]

Artemesia, varieties of which are also known as wormwood or southernwood, is a decorative, aromatic plant (used for wreaths in modern times). The white variant was used both in sacrifices and as food for silkworms, leading traditional commentators to read this poem as either the plaint of a palace woman who is preparing a sacrifice for her ruler’s ancestors or a peasant girl’s gathering the plant as part of the silk-

making process. Since the *bi* that is referred to twice in the last stanza was a kind of hairpiece woven into the hair atop the head for certain rituals, my reading will follow the former interpretation.

The palace woman's task is onerous, taking her to various out-of-the-way places. She asks where she will find the plant, not literally to check herself, but to heighten her suffering for her audience. Although her journey from the nearby ponds to the river islets and then up the small valley of a tributary may not seem too arduous, the final stanza reveals the toll it takes. Portrayed synecdochically through her hair knot, the woman works day and night and ends up as exhausted as her fallen coiffure suggests. Her motion is suggested in the first two stanzas by the staccato rhyme scheme: *xaxa / xbx*. The doubled rhyme of the first couplet of the final stanza (*ccdd*) slackens the pace of the song and allows the persona a moment to reflect on her disheveled coiffure as she rushes to return.

The gathering of white artemesia was clearly women's work, as we read in the final stanza of "Chu ju" (Send Out the Chariots [Mao no. 168]), which depicts the return of a victorious army and the preparation for sacrifices to celebrate that victory:

	The spring days long, so long,	春日遲遲	( <i>chūn rì chí chí</i> )
2	The plants and trees lushly leafed.	卉木萋萋	( <i>huì mù qī qī</i> )
	The orioles warble in harmony as	倉庚喈喈	( <i>cāng gēng jiē jiē</i> )
4	Gathering white artemesia go the women		
	in profusion.	采芣苢	( <i>cǎi fán qí qí</i> )
	We have seized for questioning the		
	captured caitiffs.	執訊獲醜	( <i>zhí xùn guó chǒu</i> )
6	As we hurriedly return.	薄言還歸	( <i>bó yán huán guī</i> )
	Awe-inspiring is Nanzhong—	赫赫南仲	( <i>hè hè nán zhòng</i> )
8	The Xianyun are pacified!	玁狁于夷	( <i>xiǎn yǎn yú yí</i> )

[MSZJ 9.10a]

The oriole seems to symbolize the return from the martial life on campaign to the domestic world of the family, as in "Dong shan" (East Mountain [Mao no. 156]). Another poem about gathering plants is "Ge tan" (The Kudzu Vine Grows Longer [Mao no. 2]):

<b>The Kudzu Vine Grows Longer</b>		葛覃	(gě tán)
	The kudzu vine is grown longer	葛之覃兮	(gě zhī tán xī)
2	Spread to the middle of the valley—	施于中谷	(yì yú zhōng gǔ)
	It has leaves so luxuriant.	維葉萋萋	(wéi yè qī qī)
4	The yellow birds take to flight,	黃鳥于飛	(huáng niǎo yú fēi)
	Gather in the copse of trees	集于灌木	(jí yú guàn mù)
6	And sing in a chorus of warbling.	其鳴喈喈	(qí míng jiē jiē)
		葛之覃兮	(gě zhī tán xī)
8	Spread to the middle of the valley—	施于中谷	(yì yú zhōng gǔ)
	It has leaves so dense.	維葉莫莫	(wéi yè mò mò)
10	Cut it, boil it,	是刈是濩	(shì yì shì huò)
	For the fine cloth and the coarse;	為絺為綌	(wéi chī wéi xì)
12	I shall not tire of wearing them.	服之無斁	(fú zhī wú yì)
		言告師氏	(yán gào shī shì)
14	Told and taught about being married—	言告言歸	(yán gào yán guī)
	Rinsing clean my underclothes	薄汙我私	(bó wū wǒ sī)
16	Washing out my jacket—	薄澣我衣	(bó huǎn wǒ yī)
	What should I wash, what not?	害澣害否	(hé huǎn hé fǒu)
18	I am going home to ask after my parents.	歸寧父母	(guī níng fù mǔ)

[MSZJ 1.3b–4b]

This poem is more disjointed and obscure than any we have examined. Images that may have been familiar to the early Zhou audience have grown strange to us. This has naturally attracted readers and led to many varied interpretations over the centuries. Given the proper textual contexts, however, we can see that this is the song of a bride who is excitedly preparing for the traditional visit back to her parents' home three days after being married. The key to understanding the poem lies in the *xing*: "The kudzu vine is grown longer / Spread to the middle of the valley." The kudzu vine was used in a ceremony celebrated by the Zhou dynasty nobility in which the bridegroom personally received the bride.<sup>7</sup> At this ceremony, the bride's mother would receive several pairs of kudzu-vine sandals and then have her daughter tread in them (symbolizing conjugal relations). Thereafter, the mother would give the daughter various instructions about how to comport herself, receive her daughter's obeisance, and finally place the bride's hands in those of the groom, who would then lead his wife from the room.

The vine itself produces many narrow pods filled with seeds, which symbolize fertility (the word *zi* means both “seeds” and “children”), and its fiber is durable, symbolizing a strong relationship between the wife and her husband. In this poem, the affective image is also meant to suggest (by comparison) the initial success of the marriage, in which the bonds have already grown stronger in the first few days of the relationship, as the vines have grown longer. The vines may also suggest the ties to the bride’s new family, as they clearly do in “Ge lei” (Kudzu Vine and Bean Creeper [Mao no. 71]). Although the nature of the persona’s relationship to her in-laws depicted in “Ge lei” differs from that in “Ge tan,” the image of the kudzu as the new entwinements of the bride with her in-laws is the same. Line 3 of “Ge tan” emphasizes the successes the bride is having with her new family, the luxuriant leaves echoing the same image (and same significance) seen earlier in “Tao yao.”

Birds in flight (line 4) are sometimes compared with the appearance of humans, especially in ritual situations (as in “Zhen lu” [Egrets in Flight, Mao no. 278], discussed later). The flight of these yellow birds (probably siskins) may symbolize the bride’s joining the new flock of her husband’s family. Now settled after the bustle of the marriage ceremony, the family is in harmony, as are the birds in their song.

The second stanza reiterates the harmony of the marriage in lines 1–3, echoed by the repeated rhyme scheme (*xabbab*, *xaccac*). But in line 10, we move to the making of clothes from the kudzu, also perhaps a marriage ritual. The coarse and fine cloth and the persona’s willingness to wear either without tiring may be something similar to the vows we exchange in marriage: “For better or for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part.”

In the final stanza, there is an immediacy and urgency absent in the two previous stanzas. The *shi shi* in line 13, translated as “duenna,” would normally have indicated a Zhou dynasty official in charge of instructing noblewomen. But here, in a poem about a common young girl, it is used—parallel to the use of *junzi* for both “lord” and “lordly man”—to refer to a female servant. Lines 13–17 all contain repetition, reflecting the excited state of mind of the persona, a state of mind we all share before setting out on a journey, especially a journey home to our parents. The persona feels comfortable enough in her new home to banter idly with the duenna—“What should I wash, what not?”—and it is this comfort that she hopes to take back to her parents.

Although “Ge tan” shares the motif of gathering plants with “Cai fan,”

the ideal mate of “Cai fan” must be “Cai pin” (Gathering the Duckweed [Mao no. 15]):

### C1.11

Gathering the Duckweed		采蘋	(cǎi pín)
	Where can I gather the duckweed?	于以采蘋	(yú yǐ cǎi pín)
2	On the banks of the southern dale.	南澗之濱	(nán jiàn zhī bīn)
	Where can I gather the water grasses?	于以采藻	(yú yǐ cǎi zǎo)
4	In those rainwater pools along the paths.	于彼行潦	(yú bǐ yán lǎo)
	Where can I deposit them?	于以盛之	(yú yǐ chéng zhī)
6	In baskets square and round,	維筐及筥	(wéi kuāng jí jǔ)
	In cauldrons and pans.	于以湘之	(yú yǐ xiāng zhī)
8	And sing in a chorus of warbling.	維錡及釜	(wéi yǐ jí fǔ)
	Where can I offer them?	于以奠之	(yú yǐ diàn zhī)
10	Beneath the window of the ancestral shrine?	宗室牖下	(zōng shì yǒu xià)
	Who will represent the spirits?	誰其尸之	(shéi qí shī zhī)
12	There is a reverent, unmarried maid.	有齊季女	(yǒu qí jì nǚ)

[MSZJ 1.12a–13a]

This poem is also tied to the ritual of marriage (according to the “Hun yi” [Meaning of Marriage] chapter of the *Li ji* [Record of Rituals]). Three months before the marriage is to take place, the prospective bride is instructed at the family’s ancestral shrine in how she is expected to speak and act in her new setting as a wife. At the culmination of her lessons, sacrifices of fish, duckweed, and water grasses are offered. The question-and-answer form of the poem reflects that of the more formal catechism the girl has underdone at the ancestral shrine (perhaps reflected in the balanced rhyme scheme *aabb / xcxc / xdx*). The first stanza depicts where the bride-to-be should search for the sacrificial plants; the second, how to prepare them; and the third, where to position them. The *shi* referred to in the penultimate line is the person who impersonates the ancestors in sacrifices: here the young woman who is to be married. The poem seems not to be sung by her, but about her, perhaps by the women who picked duckweed or other plants regularly.

Sacrifice is a regular theme of the *song* hymns, as “Zhen lu” (Egrets in Flight [Mao no. 278]) illustrates:

## C1.12

<b>Egrets in Flight</b>		振鷺	(zhèn lù)
	A flock of egrets in flight	振鷺于飛	(zhèn lù yú fēi)
2	Over that western marsh.	于彼西離	(yú bǐ xī yōng)
	Our guests have arrived —	我客戾止	(wǒ kè lì zhǐ)
4	They also have this appearance.	亦有斯容	(yì yǒu sī róng)
	Among those (spirits), no distaste;	在彼無惡	(zài bǐ wú è)
6	Among these (who sacrifice), no fatigue.	在此無斁	(zài cǐ wú yì)
	May they from dawn to dusk	庶幾夙夜	(shù jǐ sù yè)
8	Thereby make their (ancestors') fame		
	everlasting.	以永終譽	(yǐ yǒng zhōng yù)

[MSZJ 19.7b–8a]

The host is the Zhou king, who invites the descendants of the former dynasties (Xia and Shang) to come to court and present sacrifices to their ancestors (and the Zhou predecessors). It has been argued that egrets were selected for this metaphoric poem because the immediate predecessors of the Zhou, the Shang, honored white above all colors. But egrets are elegant birds and are used metaphorically to describe courtiers in “You bi” (The Robust Horse [Mao no. 298]) as well. The idea of the flight of birds suggesting a comparison with human activities is a common one in the *Book of Poetry* (for example, “Hong yan” [Wild Geese, Mao no. 181]). In this sacrificial hymn, we can imagine perhaps two rows of supplicants: one of the Xia line and the other of the Shang descendants, the rows suggesting the formation of the egrets in flight. After the scene has been set in the first stanza, the second offers the hope that the supplicants will be diligent and the ancestral spirits receptive. In this way, the song argues, both ancestral lines will become immortal. The rhyme scheme (xaxa, bbbb) is striking and seems to suggest (in the second stanza), in its repetitiveness, the solemnity of the moment, perhaps echoed by bells or drums.

The final poem to be examined, “Mian” (Woven [Mao no. 237]), is one of the series of pieces in the “Da ya” (Greater Elegantiae) that depicts the founding of the Zhou dynasty, particularly the exploits of its first ruler, King Wen:

## C1.13

### Woven

- Woven and unbroken are the gourds, large and small.  
2 As the early life of our people.  
From the Du to the Qi  
4 Came the ancient honorable Dan Fu.  
He dug shelters, he dug caves—  
6 They still did not have houses and homes.

綿

(*mián*)

綿綿瓜瓞

(*mián mián guā dié*)

民之初生

(*mín zhī chū shēng*)

自土沮漆

(*zì tǔ cú qī*)

古公亶父

(*gǔ gōng dǎn fǔ*)

陶復陶穴

(*táo fù táo xué*)

未有家室

(*wèi yǒu jiā shì*)

The ancient honorable Dan Fu,  
 8 On the next morning drove his horses.  
 Leading them west along the banks of the river,  
 10 He reached the foot of Mount Qi.  
 Then with the woman Jiang  
 12 He came himself to look for places to dwell.  
  
 The plain of Zhou was so fertile  
 14 Even bitter celery was like honey.  
 Then he began, then he divined,  
 16 Then he notched our tortoises.  
 They read "stay," they read "it's time."  
 18 So he built homes there.  
  
 And so he was content, and so he stayed.  
 20 And so he created a left, and so he made a right.  
 And so he set boundaries, and so he made territories.  
 22 And so he dredged gullies, and so ordered the fields;  
 From the west to the east  
 24 Everywhere he then took charge of affairs.  
  
 The he summoned a Master of Construction;  
 26 Then he summoned a Master of Labor.  
 So that they could erect houses and homes.  
 28 Their plumb lines ruled straight,  
 They lashed together planks as earthen molds,  
 30 To build an ancestral temple, reverent and respectful.  
  
 Carrying the earth in crowds and multitudes,  
 32 Throwing it into molds with clamors and shouts;  
 Raising walls with a pounding beat,  
 34 Smoothing them with a scraping sound.  
 One hundred walls rose up together —  
 36 The beating of the work drums could not keep up!  
  
 So he created the outer gate soaring,  
 38 Soaring the gate so high.  
 So he erected the palace gate,  
 40 The palace gate so grand.  
 So he erected a great earthen shrine,  
 42 Whereby to parade the Rong captives (in defeat).  
  
 Tho' over time he could not stop the enemy's wrath,  
 44 Still they did no harm to our reputation.  
 He thinned the oaks,  
 46 He cleared the roads,

古公亶父 (gǔ gōng dǎn fǔ)  
 來朝走馬 (lái zhāo zǒu mǎ)  
 率西水滸 (shuài xī shuǐ hǔ)  
 至于岐下 (zhì yú qí xià)  
 爰及姜女 (yuán jí jiāng nǚ)  
 聿來胥宇 (yù lái xū yǔ)  
  
 周原膴膴 (zhōu yuán wǔ wǔ)  
 萑荼如飴 (hūn tú rú yí)  
 爰始爰謀 (yuán shǐ yuán móu)  
 爰契我龜 (yuán qì wǒ guī)  
 曰止曰時 (yuē zhǐ yuē shí)  
 築室于茲 (zhù shì yú zī)  
  
 迺慰迺止 (nǎi wèi nǎi zhǐ)  
 迺左迺右 (nǎi zuǒ nǎi yòu)  
 迺疆迺理 (nǎi jiāng nǎi lǐ)  
 迺宣迺畝 (nǎi xuān nǎi mǔ)  
 自西徂東 (zì xī cú dōng)  
 周爰執事 (zhōu yuán zhí shì)  
  
 乃召司空 (nǎi zhāo sī kōng)  
 乃召司徒 (nǎi zhāo sī tú)  
 俾立室家 (bǐ lì shì jiā)  
 其繩則直 (qí shéng zé zhí)  
 縮版以載 (suō bǎn yǐ zǎi)  
 作廟翼翼 (zuò miào yì yì)  
  
 揀之陿陿 (jiǎn zhī réng réng)  
 度之薿薿 (duó zhī hōng hōng)  
 築之登登 (zhù zhī dēng dēng)  
 削履馮馮 (xuē lǚ féng féng)  
 百堵皆興 (bǎi dǔ jiē xīng)  
 鼙鼓弗勝 (pí gǔ fú shèng)  
  
 迺立皋門 (nǎi lì gāo mén)  
 皋門有伉 (gāo mén yǒu kàng)  
 迺立應門 (nǎi lì yīng mén)  
 應門將將 (yīng mén qiāng qiāng)  
 迺立冢土 (nǎi lì zhǒng shù)  
 戎醜攸行 (róng chǒu yǒu xíng)  
  
 肆不殄厥愠 (sì bù tiǎn jué yùn)  
 亦不隕厥問 (yì bù sǔn jué wèn)  
 柞棫拔矣 (zuò yù bá yǐ)  
 行道兌矣 (xíng dào duì yǐ)



	He frightened away the Kun barbarians —	混夷駟矣 (kūn yí tuì yǐ)
48	Ah, how they panted in exhaustion.	維其喙矣 (wéi qí huì yǐ)
	To cause the Yu and the Rui to pledge peace,	虞芮質厥成 (yú ruì zhì jué chéng)
50	King Wen quickened their yielding natures.	文王黻厥生 (wén wáng guì jué shēng)
	I say he brought those estranged to follow him;	予曰有疏附 (yù yuē yǒu shū fù)
52	I say he drew those from front and back to him;	予曰有先後 (yù yuē yǒu xiān hòu)
	I say he caused those with petitions to rush to him;	予曰有奔奏 (yù yuē yǒu bēn zòu)
54	I say he brought his defamers to his defense.	予曰有禦侮 (yù yuē yǒu yù wǔ)

[MSZJ 16.4b–7b]

Although this poem is primarily expositional in style, it opens with an affective image that suggests the “woven and unbroken” history of the Zhou people, as portrayed in the “Da ya” section. This poem contains an account of Dan Fu, the grandfather of King Wen. The most detailed account of his life and rule can be found in the “Basic Annals of the Zhou” in **Sima Qian’s** (145–86? B.C.E.) *Shiji* (*Records of the Grand Scribe*):

The ancient honorable Dan Fu again cultivated the enterprise [to establish the Zhou dynasty] of Hou Ji and Gong Liu, accumulated virtue, and carried out justice. The people of the capital all supported him. When the Xunyu and the Rong-Di attacked him, desiring to obtain wealth and goods, he gave it to them. Again they attacked, desiring to obtain his territory and his people. The people were all angry and wanted to give battle. The ancient and honorable one said, “The people enthrone a lord in order that he will bring benefits to them. Now the reason the Rong-Di are attacking and battling us is to take my territory and people. For the people to be with me or for them to be with those others, what is the difference? The people want to give battle because of me, but I cannot bear to kill people’s fathers and sons to keep myself their lord.” Thus he left Bin [the capital] with his personal attendants, crossed the Qi and the Ju rivers, traversed Mount Liang, and stopped at the foot of Mount Qi. Every person in Bin, holding up their elders and carrying their children, again submitted themselves to Dan Fu at the foot of Mount Qi. When other, neighboring states learned of the ancient honorable one’s humanity, many indeed submitted to him. At this, the ancient honorable one then abandoned the customs of the Rong-Di, built city walls and residences, and settled the people in various cities. He appointed officials for the five offices. The people all put this to song and music

to praise his virtue.<sup>8</sup>

Thus Dan Fu (literally, Generous Man) is the leader of the Zhou who broke with the barbarian customs and moved his people away from the Rong-Di to what is modern southeastern Shaanxi. The other parallels to the more general *Shiji* account provide a running commentary to this poem. It is only necessary to add that walls were built in the early Zhou era by tamping earth between wooden planks lashed together with ropes (lines 29–33).

Although not a highly literary piece, this long poem evinces careful attention to sound patterns. Almost every line is rhymed. The third through fifth stanzas, lines that could be considered an account of the preparations for the building of Dan Fu's new capital, are joined by words that all rhyme to the *same* rhyme category. The rhyme words in the sixth stanza, in which the sounds of construction reverberate, were also skillfully chosen, each ending in the sonorous nasal *-ng*.

In the final stanza, the focus suddenly switches from Dan Fu to his grandson, King Wen. This section could be a later interpolation designed to help fit “Mian” into the epiclike account of King Wen that dominates most “Da ya” poems.



This selection of poems should provide a good introduction to this classical anthology and to its prosody. Its various themes and even the language helped shape countless later works while providing a source for allusion down to modern times. Many of the poems in the *Book of Poetry* remain paradoxically alive for the modern reader because of the simple beauty of their imagery juxtaposed to the complexity—often the obscurity—of their messages.

The tetrasyllabic line that the poets of early Zhou times found so natural may represent speech or musical patterns of that era. This meter declined from the sixth century B.C.E. on. By the Han dynasty, when the new pentasyllabic line had become increasingly popular ([chap. 5](#)), tetrasyllabic verse had taken on an archaic tone. From the Han on, it was used mainly for hymns and state pieces.

Finally, it must be noted that, although the interpretative approach in this chapter is similar to that promulgated by most modern scholars, in attempting to read these poems as folk songs that have been reworked by court singers, the traditional interpretation of the *Book of Poetry* as a

collection of allegorical works is belied. The reading of these poems as allegories, or the attempts to contextualize them in the complex history of pre-Qin China, dominated the understanding of all three hundred of the poems from the time the poems were first written down in the middle of the first millennium B.C.E. through the early Song dynasty (mid-eleventh century). These traditional interpretations were often quite explicit. The “Xiao xu” (Little Preface) of the Han dynasty, for example, read “I Beg of You, Zhong Zi” not as a love poem (as I did earlier) but as a criticism of the failure by Duke Zhuang of Zheng (r. 743–701 B.C.E.) to restrain his mother. If this correlation seems forced to us moderns, it was nevertheless accepted by most traditional readers until the Song dynasty scholars of the eleventh century began to argue for more literal interpretations of these songs. Nevertheless, some readers continued to understand the three hundred poems in the *Book of Poetry* as political poems into modern times. Moreover, the millenary acceptance of reading the *Book of Poetry*’s love poems as politically motivated verse influenced many readers (and writers) of traditional poetry in all genres over many centuries, as will be seen in the following chapters.

William H. Nienhauser Jr.

#### NOTES

1. Barbara Hughes Fowler, trans., *Archaic Greek Poetry: An Anthology* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 53.
2. Fowler, *Archaic Greek Poetry*, 106.
3. This and all subsequent translations are the author’s.
4. “[Love, how I’d love to slip down to the pond]”, trans. John L. Foster, in *The Norton Anthology of World Masterpieces*, vol. 1, *Beginnings to 1650*, ed. Maynard Mack (New York: Norton, 1995), 58.
5. On the meaning of *nan*, see the detailed discussion in Chen Zhi, “From Standardization to Localization: Reconsidering the Section Divisions of the *Book of Songs*” (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1999), 283–284.
6. Fowler, *Archaic Greek Poetry*, 133.
7. See the excellent discussion by Chow Tse-tsung, “The Childbirth Myth and Ancient Chinese Medicine, a Study of Aspects of the *Wu* Tradition,” in *Ancient China: Studies in Early Civilization*, ed. David T. Roy and Tsuen-hsuei Tsien (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1978), 43–89, especially 47–53.
8. Sima Qian, *Shiji (Records of the Grand Scribe)* (Beijing: Zhonghua zhuju, 1959), 4.113–114.

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## Sao Poetry

### The *Lyrics of Chu* (*Chuci*)

*Chuci* (lyrics of Chu) is a type of poetry that flourished in the Chu region during the Warring States period (403–227 B.C.E.). The poems were collected in the anthology *Chuci zhangju* (*Commentary Edition of Chuci*), edited by Wang Yi (fl. 114–119) of the Han dynasty. It contains nearly sixty poems, which can be divided into two groups. The first group is composed of the earlier poems, written and compiled, according to Wang Yi and other Chinese scholars, by Qu Yuan (340?–278 B.C.E.), a statesman and nobleman of the Chu state (it should be noted that there is a great deal of controversy regarding the authorship of these works). The second group consists of poems written by later poets (including Wang Yi himself) in imitation of the earlier works. The most significant poem in this anthology is “Lisao” (On Encountering Trouble), presumably composed by Qu Yuan. It represents the crowning achievement of the genre. *Sao*, the second character of its title, is often used to refer to the entire *Chuci* repertoire and any work written in the *Chuci* style.

As a product of the Chu culture in the south, *Chuci* poems demonstrate considerable differences from those in the ***Shijing*** (*The Book of Poetry*), in both content and form. In content, the influence of shamanism is most remarkable, as many of the early poems in this genre, especially the “Jiuge” (Nine Songs), apparently portray its rituals and performances. This is even evident in many passages of “On Encountering Trouble,” a long narrative poem with a discernible and unprecedented autobiographical framework and voice. In form, *Chuci* poems adopt a format that is marked by longer lines than those in the *Shijing*. The following sample is from “On Encountering Trouble”:

ancestor	Gao	Yang	of	offspring	descendant	xi	帝高陽之苗裔兮	(dì gāo yáng zhī miáo yì xī)
my	honored	father	called	Bo	Yong		朕皇考曰伯庸	(zhèn huáng kǎo yuē bó yōng)
she	ti	point	to	beginning	first month	xi	攝提貞于孟陬兮	(shè tí zhēn yú mèng zōu xī)
on	geng	yin	I	hence	descend		惟庚寅吾以降	(wéi gēng yīn wú yǐ jiàng)

The length of these four lines alternates between six and seven characters. This is the dominant pattern in “On Encountering Trouble,” although there are quite a few exceptions. In other poems, however, the lines can be either shorter or longer. Another prominent formal feature in the *Chuci* is the use of the refrain word *xi*. Although this usage also occurs in the *Shijing* and other earlier texts, it was rather sporadic. In the *Chuci*, it became a constant, although its positions in the poems belonging to this genre also varies. In “On Encountering Trouble,” as evident in the example, it appears at the end of odd-numbered lines, but in the “Nine Songs,” it is placed within each line, as is illustrated by the following two lines from “Xiang jun” (The Lord of the Xiang River):

lord	not	move	xi	hesitate	—	君不行兮夷猶	(jūn bù xíng xī yí yóu)
[for]	who	remain	xi	middle	isle	蹇誰留兮中洲	(jiǎn shuí liú xī zhōng zhōu)

The function of *xi* is thought to be mostly musical, since as a word it does not have much meaning except to indicate a drawn-out sound similar to the *a* in modern Chinese. As in the poems of the *Shijing* and later periods, rhyming in the *Chuci* takes place in the last word of even-numbered lines. For example, the rhyming words in the earlier passage from “On Encountering Trouble” are *yōng* and *jiàng*, pronounced in archaic Chinese as *liwoŋ* and *yeuŋ*, respectively. In some short poems, one rhyme is used throughout, but in “On Encountering Trouble,” the rhyme changes several times.

During the early Han dynasty, there was a tremendous interest in the *Chuci*, thanks to the dynasty’s early rulers, who came from the Chu region. **Han Gaozu** (r. 206–194 B.C.E.), the founding emperor of the Han, wrote his famous “**Dafeng ge**” (Song of the Great Wind) in *Chuci* meter. **Han Wudi** (r. 140–87 B.C.E.), another powerful monarch of the dynasty, was also a practitioner of the genre. Several princes of the royal family were actively involved in studying, editing, and composing *Chuci* poems. **Liu An** (179–122 B.C.E.), the prince of Huainan, for example, wrote the first commentary on “On Encountering Trouble.” Critical views of the

*Chuci* varied from the early Han on. While most critics emphasized its continuity with the *Shijing* tradition and praised Qu Yuan for his steadfast loyalty to his state, others expressed uneasiness. **Ban Gu** (32–92), the author of the *Han shu* (*History of the Han Dynasty*), accused Qu Yuan of being arrogant and self-flaunting and of using a poetic language filled with “empty words” (*xuwu zhi yu*).<sup>1</sup> **Liu Xie** (ca. 465–ca. 522), the author of the *Wenxin diaolong* (*The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*), arguably the greatest work of literary criticism ever written in China, listed several features in “On Encountering Trouble” that conform to and stray from the classics and characterized it as “extraordinary writing” (*qiwen*). He also criticized Qu Yuan’s decision to commit suicide (for more on this, see the later discussion of “On Encountering Trouble”) as “narrow-minded.”<sup>2</sup> Throughout Chinese literary history, though, the *Chuci* and its main hero, Qu Yuan, have proved to be an enduring presence and influence. In time, Qu Yuan became a national hero of China, and Shi-Sao (the *Shijing* and “Lisao,” the *Chuci* writ large) came to represent the very foundation of the Chinese poetic tradition.

This chapter presents two poems from the “Nine Songs” and an excerpted version of “On Encountering Trouble.”<sup>3</sup>

The “Nine Songs” are generally believed to be songs that were performed at shamanistic rituals. There are in fact eleven songs in this group, and with the exception of two, each is dedicated to a particular deity. They are thought to have been compiled and polished by Qu Yuan. The state of Chu, situated along the Yangtze River in southern China, was known for its shamanistic practices. Ban Gu once observed that the people of Chu “believe in the power of shamans and spirits and are much addicted to lewd religious rites.”<sup>4</sup> The Chinese word for “shaman,” *wu*, originally referred to someone who could summon gods and spirits through dancing and singing. One of the essential qualities that shamans claimed to possess was the ability to communicate with these supernatural beings. Shamans also maintained that they often had to leave their physical bodies to meet with such beings, either above in heaven or down on earth. Thus a journey or flight is a recurrent motif in the “Nine Songs” and, to a lesser extent, in “On Encountering Trouble.”

## C2.1

The Lord of the Xiang River	湘君	(xiāng jūn)
My lord has not come, he is hesitant, Who is it that keeps him on the isle? A lovely lady with delicate beauty, I move quickly on my cassia boat.	君不行兮夷猶 蹇誰留兮中洲 美要眇兮宜修 沛吾乘兮桂舟	(jūn bù xíng xi yí yóu) (jiǎn shuí liú xi zhōng zhōu) (měi yāo miǎo xi yí xiū) (pèi wú chéng xi guì zhōu)
5 I order the Yuan and Xiang to calm their waves, And command the Great River to ease its flow. I look out for my lord, but still he is not here, I play the reed pipes, but who is in my mind? I ride my flying dragon to journey to the north,	令沅湘兮無波 使江水兮安流 望夫君兮未來 吹參差兮誰思 駕飛龍兮北征	(lìng yuán xiāng xi wú bō) (shǐ jiāng shuǐ xi ān liú) (wàng fū jūn xi wèi lái) (chuī cēng cī xi shuǐ sī) (jià fēi lóng xi běi zhēng)
10 And steer my way toward Dong-ting Lake. My sail is decorated with fig leaves and melilot, Iris and orchid banners cover my flagpole. I gaze at the northern side of the Cen, far away, And wafting my magic I cross the Great River.	遭吾道兮洞庭 薜荔柏兮蕙綢 蓀旖兮蘭旌 望涔陽兮極浦 橫大江兮揚靈	(zhāo wú dào xi dòng tíng) (pì lì bó xi huì chóu) (sūn yǎo xi lán jīng) (wàng cén yáng xi jí pǔ) (héng dà jiāng xi yáng líng)
15 Wafting my magic, I still have not reached him, My women are upset and heave deep sighs. My tears run down like small streams, The thought of you makes me grieve. The cassia oars and orchid sweep on my boat	揚靈兮未極 女嬃媛兮為余太息 橫流涕兮潺湲 隱思君兮陲側 桂櫂兮蘭枻	(yáng líng xi wèi jí) (nǚ chán yuán xi wèi yú tài xī) (héng liú tì xi chán yuán) (yǐn sī jūn xi fěi cè) (guì zhào xi lán yì)
20 Chip and knock at the ice and snow. I pick fig leaves in the water, And pluck lotuses from the treetops. <sup>5</sup> Our hearts are different: all matchmaking is in vain,	斨冰兮積雪 采薜荔兮水中 搴芙蓉兮木末 心不同兮媒勞	(zhuó bīng xi jī xuě) (cǎi pì lì xi shuǐ zhōng) (qiān fú róng xi mù mò) (xīn bù tóng xi méi láo)
Our love is not deep: it is easy to break. 25 A stream dashes through the stone shallows, And the flying dragon hovers above. Unfaithful relations cause long bitterness, He broke our date, telling me that he had no time.	恩不甚兮輕絕 石瀨兮淺淺 飛龍兮翩翩 交不忠兮怨長 期不信兮告余以不聞	(ēn bù shèn xi qīng jué) (shí lài xi jiān jiān) (fēi lóng xi piān piān) (jiāo bù zhōng xi yuàn cháng) (qī bù xìn xi gào yú yǐ bù wén)
In the morning I race along the riverside,	鼉鳴驚兮江皋	(zhāo chēng wù xi jiāng gāo)
30 By the evening I halt my chariot at the north bank. Birds are roosting on the rooftops, And waters are circling around the hall. I throw my jade ring into the river, And leave my pendant in the mouth of the Li.	夕弭節兮北渚 鳥次兮屋上 水周兮堂下 捐余玦兮江中 遺余佩兮醴浦	(xī mǐ jié xi běi zhǔ) (niǎo cì xi wū shàng) (shuǐ zhōu xi táng xià) (juān yú jué xi jiāng zhōng) (yí yú pèi xi lǐ pǔ)
35 I pick lavenders in the fragrant isle, And will give them to my women below. A lost moment cannot be regained, Let us now take our time and roam at ease.	采芳洲兮杜若 將以遺兮下女 豈不可兮再得 聊逍遙兮容與	(cǎi fāng zhōu xi dù ruò) (jiāng yǐ wèi xi xià nǚ) (shǐ bù kě xi zài dé) (liáo xiāo yáo xi róng yǔ)



As I have indicated, many uncertainties and ambiguities characterize the “Nine Songs.” In this poem, one of the most beautiful in the group, these uncertainties and ambiguities start from its title. Since the Chinese word *jun* is ambivalent in its indication of gender, the poem may be read as addressing either a male or a female deity. Here I have adopted the opinion that this poem and the next, “The Lady of the Xiang River,” form a dialogic exchange between the two deities of the Xiang River, the largest river in the Chu region. As parts of a shamanistic ritual, they were spoken and performed respectively by a female (in “The Lord of the Xiang River”) and a male (in “The Lady of the Xiang River”) shaman in search of each other.<sup>6</sup>

Several important features of this poem were further developed by Qu Yuan in “On Encountering Trouble.” First of all, the central motif of the poem is a love quest. The quest is conducted in a peculiarly shamanistic style: the protagonist rides on supernatural creatures, crosses between heaven and earth, and commands the natural world to be at her service. The quest, however, fails because her lord breaks his promise.<sup>7</sup> This failure produces a profound melancholy that informs the entire verse. It also causes a temporary estrangement from her lover-deity; yet, despite all the disappointment, she remains loyal to him in the end. As we shall see, Qu Yuan appropriated this motif in “On Encountering Trouble” and made it into the central metaphor of his relationship with his monarch and state. Also noteworthy is the use of floral imagery in this poem. Beautiful flowers and plants are important components of a shamanistic ritual; they represent the sincerity, beauty, and solemnity of a religious performance. In the hands of Qu Yuan, however, this feature was given a moral dimension; it became a vital part of his symbolism in “On Encountering Trouble.”

The companion piece, “The Lady of the Xiang River,” demonstrates many similar features. Its central motif is also the quest for a lover-deity. One noticeable difference is the section describing Dragon steeds, heavenly birds, the much-expanded floral imagery used to portray it (lines 19–32). Another similarity is that the last section of the verse (lines 35–40) is nearly identical to that of the “Lord of the Xiang River.” This has prompted some critics to claim that, unlike the main body of the two verses, which were performed by individual shamans, this part must have been sung by a choir.

## C2.2

### The Lady of the Xiang River

- Child of god, please come down to the north bank!  
Longingly I let my vision roam, heart heavy with grief.  
Gently the autumn wind wafts,  
Leaves fall on the waves of Dong-ting Lake.
- 5 I climb the white-sedge spot to look out for her,  
And get ready for the meeting with my love  
this evening.  
Why should birds want to gather in the duckweed?  
And what are the fishnets doing in the treetops?<sup>10</sup>  
The Yuan has its angelica, and the Li its orchids,
- 10 I am thinking of my lady, but afraid of saying so.  
I look out into the misty distance,  
And observe the murmuring waters flow.  
Why are the deer eating in the courtyard?  
What are the water dragons doing by the riverside?
- 15 In the morning I let my horse gallop by the river,  
In the evening I cross the western shore.  
I seem to hear my love calling to me,  
So I will gallop aloft to ride by her.  
I will build her a house in the water,
- 20 And cover its roof with lotus leaves.  
I will use iris to paint its walls, purple shells to  
decorate its court,  
And will spread perfumed peppers in its hall.  
Its beams will be made of cassia, rafters of orchid,  
The lintel of the peony room will be from lily trees.
- 25 Woven fig leaves will be used for its curtains,  
And melilot screens will be set up.  
White jade will be there to hold the mats,  
Thoroughworts will be placed to spread their scent.  
White sedges will cover the lotus room,
- 30 Stalks of asarum will circle around it.  
A hundred sweet flowers will fill the courtyard  
To disperse their fragrance in the chambers and  
hallways.  
The spirits of Jiuyi Mountain will all come out to  
welcome us,<sup>11</sup>  
They will arrive in large throngs like clouds.

- 湘夫人 (xiāng fū rén)
- 帝子降兮北 (dì zǐ jiàng xi běi zhǔ)  
目眇眇兮愁予 (mù miǎo miǎo xi chóu yú)  
嫋嫋兮秋風 (niǎo niǎo xi qiū fēng)  
洞庭波兮木葉下 (dòng tíng bō xi mù yè xià)  
登<sup>8</sup>白蘋兮馳望 (dēng bái fán xi chěng wàng)
- 與佳期兮夕張 (yǔ jiā qī xi xī zhāng)  
鳥何<sup>9</sup>萃兮蘋中 (niǎo hé cuì xi pín zhōng)  
罾何為兮木上 (zēng hé wéi xi mù shàng)  
沅有茝兮醴有蘭 (yuán yǒu zhǐ xi lǐ yǒu lán)  
思公子兮未敢言 (sī gōng zǐ xi wèi gǎn yán)  
荒忽兮遠望 (huāng hū xi yuǎn wàng)  
觀流水兮潺湲 (guān liú shuǐ xi chán yuán)  
麋何食兮庭中 (mí hé shí xi tíng zhōng)  
蛟何為兮水裔 (jiāo hé wéi xi shuǐ yì)  
朝馳余馬兮江皋 (zhāo chí yú mǎ xi jiāng gāo)  
夕濟兮西澨 (xī jì xi xī shì)  
聞佳人兮召予 (wén jiā rén xi zhāo yú)  
將騰駕兮偕逝 (jiāng téng jià xi xié shì)  
筑室兮水中 (zhù shì xi shuǐ zhōng)  
葺之兮荷蓋 (qì zhī xi hé gài)
- 蓀壁兮紫壇 (sūn bì xi zǐ tán)  
播芳椒兮成堂 (bō fāng jiāo xi chéng táng)  
桂棟兮蘭橈 (guì dòng xi lán láo)  
辛夷楣兮藥房 (xīn yí méi xi yào fáng)  
罔薜荔兮為帷 (wǎng pì lì xi wéi wéi)  
擗蕙櫨兮既張 (pī huì mián xi jì zhāng)  
白玉兮為鎮 (bái yù xi wéi zhèn)  
疏石蘭兮為芳 (shū shí lán xi wéi fāng)  
芷葺兮荷屋 (zhǐ qì xi hé wū)  
綠之兮杜衡 (lǜ zhī xi dù héng)  
合百草兮實庭 (hé bǎi cǎo xi shí tíng)
- 建芳馨兮廡門 (jiàn fāng xīn xi wú mén)
- 九嶷繽兮并迎 (jiǔ yí bīn xi bìng yíng)  
靈之來兮如雲 (líng zhī lái xi rú yún)

35 I throw my jacket into the river,  
 And leave my shirt in the mouth of the Li.<sup>12</sup>  
 I pick lavenders in the fragrant isle,  
 And will give them to the one far away.  
 Time of happiness cannot be had repeatedly,  
 40 Let us now take our time and roam at ease.

捐余袂兮江中 (juān yù mèi xi jiāng zhōng)  
 遺余褌兮醴浦 (yí yú diē xi lǐ pǔ)  
 搴汀洲兮杜若 (qiān tīng zhōu xi dù ruò)  
 將以遺兮遠者 (jiāng yǐ wèi xi yuǎn zhě)  
 時不可兮驟得 (shí bù kě xi zhòu dé)  
 聊逍遙兮容與 (liáo xiāo yáo xi róng yǔ)

[CCBZ, 64–68]

As I mentioned, in “On Encountering Trouble,” Qu Yuan appropriated some important features of these two poems, in particular their central motif of a love quest and floral imagery, and transforms them into an integral part of its symbolism. “On Encountering Trouble” is informed by an autobiographical voice that presumably belongs to Qu Yuan, and so, before turning our attention to this long poem, a brief consideration of his life will be useful.

Much of what we know about Qu Yuan is subject to controversy.<sup>13</sup> According to his disputed biography in the *Shiji* (*Records of the Grand Scribe*), compiled by **Sima Qian** (145–86? B.C.E.), Qu Yuan was a member of the royal house of Chu and once served as a high minister under King Huai (Chu Huai Wang, d. 296 B.C.E.). He was a man of great learning and a talented statesman and diplomat. At first he enjoyed the trust of King Huai, but later, the king succumbed to the vicious slander and accusations against Qu Yuan from his political rivals at court. As a result, Qu Yuan fell out of favor. After the death of King Huai, his successor, King Qingxiang (Qingxiang Wang, r. 298–263 B.C.E.), continued the persecution of Qu Yuan and eventually banished him. Qu Yuan spent a few years in exile and finally drowned himself in the Miluo River.<sup>14</sup>

The most prominent feature of “On Encountering Trouble” is that it revolves around a poetic persona, whose experience and contemplation dominate and structure this otherwise convoluted poem. The persona integrates shamanism, ancient history, and events and philosophical ideas of Qu Yuan’s time to form a unique symbolism, one that serves as a powerful tool of self-expression.

## C2.3

On Encountering Trouble		離騷	(Lí sāo)
Scion of the high lord Gao Yang, <sup>15</sup>		帝高陽之苗裔兮	(dì gāo yáng zhī miáo yì xī)
Bo Yong was my honored father's name.		朕皇考曰伯庸	(zhèn huáng kǎo yuē bó yōng)
When the constellation She Ti pointed to the first month,		攝提貞于孟陬兮	(shè tí zhēn yú mèng zōu xī)
On the day <i>geng-yin</i> I passed from the womb. <sup>16</sup>		惟庚寅吾以降	(wéi gēng yín wú yǐ jiàng)
5	My father, seeing the aspect of my nativity,	皇覽揆余初度兮	(huáng lǎn kuí yú chū dù xī)
Took omens to give me an auspicious name.		肇錫余以嘉名	(zhào cì yú yǐ jiā míng)
The name he gave me was True Exemplar		名余曰正則兮	(míng yú yuē zhèng zé xī)
The title he gave me was Divine Balance. <sup>17</sup>		字余曰靈均	(zì yú yuē líng jūn)

This section is crucial in setting the tone for the entire poem. By informing the reader of his family background at the very start, the poet firmly establishes himself as the center of the poem. He is signaling to his audience that what follows will be about him, a noble descendant from a glorious clan in the state of Chu. This rhetorical gesture was unprecedented in Qu Yuan's time (it later became common practice). Most of the poems in the *Shijing* are anonymous. In the few pieces where the author's identity is indicated, none goes to such length to establish the poet as the center. For this reason, Qu Yuan has been called China's first poet.<sup>18</sup> Note that the first-person pronoun (*zhen* 朕, *wu* 吾, *yu* 余) is repeated six times in this eight-line excerpt. Such frequent use of the first-person pronoun in a very limited space is unusual in Chinese poetry, where the pronoun is often omitted. Qu Yuan is taking great pains to draw his audience's attention to himself.

	Having from birth this inward beauty,	紛吾既有此內美兮 (fēn wú jì yǒu cǐ nèi měi xī)
10	I added to it fair outward adornment:	又重之以脩能 (yòu chóng zhī yǐ xiū néng)
	I dressed in selinea and shady angelica,	扈江離與辟芷兮 (hù jiāng lí yǔ pì zhǐ xī)
	And twined autumn orchids to make a garland.	紉秋蘭以為佩 (rèn qiū lán yǐ wéi pèi)
	Swiftly I sped as in fearful pursuit,	汨余若將不及兮 (gǔ yú ruò jiāng bù jí xī)
	Afraid that time would race on and leave me behind.	恐年歲之不吾與 (kǒng nián suì zhī bù wú yǔ)
15	In the morning I gathered the angelica on the mountains,	朝搴阨之木蘭兮 (zhāo qiān pí zhī mù lán xī)
	In the evening I plucked the sedges of the islets.	夕攬洲之宿莽 (xī lǎn zhōu zhī sù mǎng)
	The days and months hurried on, never delaying,	日月忽其不淹兮 (rì yuè hū qí bù yān xī)
	Springs and autumns sped by in endless alternation.	春與秋其代序 (chūn yǔ qiū qí dài xù)
	I thought how the trees and flowers were fading and falling,	惟草木之零落兮 (wéi cǎo mù zhī líng luò xī)
20	And feared that my Fairest's beauty would fade too.	恐美人之遲暮 (kǒng měi rén zhī chí mù)
	Gather the flower of youth and cast out the impure!	不撫壯而棄穢兮 (bù fǔ zhuàng ěr qì huì xī)
	Why will you not change the error of your ways?	何不改此度 (hé bù gǎi cǐ dù)
	I have harnessed brave coursers for you to gallop forth with,	乘騏驥以馳騁兮 (chéng qí jì yǐ chí chěng xī)
	Come, let me go before and show you the way!	來吾道夫先路 (lái wú dào fū xiān lù)

Having introduced his noble family background, Qu Yuan consolidates it in this section with his own moral cultivation. This is described in the context of the quick passage of time, the poignant sense of loss it causes the poet, and his inability to use his moral quality to serve his wrongheaded king.

This section introduces several motifs that are elaborated throughout the poem. The first, the most enduring trademark of the *Chuci*, is the trope or convention of “fragrant plants and fair one” (*xiangcao meiren*). Qu Yuan makes it clear that the selinea, autumn orchid, rare angelica, and other fragrant plants that he adorns himself with are for the purpose of complementing an “inward beauty,” thus establishing their symbolic significance. In other words, beautiful plants are objective correlatives of fine subjective qualities, and the act of gathering and applying them is meant to be understood as a symbol or metaphor for moral cultivation.

The interpretation of “Fairest” (*meiren*) has caused a lot of controversy. In ancient Chinese, the phrase is ambiguous in gender. Some scholars regard it as a reference to King Huai, while others maintain that it refers to the poet himself. On a textual level, both interpretations seem to work. This ambiguity is characteristic of the allegorical nature of “On Encountering Trouble” in that, like the “fragrant plants and fair one” in these stanzas, many of its sections clearly invite understanding at another level. Chinese critics have been eager to demonstrate the

usage's affiliations with the *Shijing*. They regard this rhetorical device as being identical with the **bi-xing** (compare and evoke) convention in the *Shijing* (chap. 1). Since the subject is important to our understanding of the allegorical and symbolic framework of the poem, it is necessary to consider the matter in some detail.

*Bi* (to compare) usually refers to an explicit comparison of two things or situations, and *xing* (to evoke) refers to an image or a situation that evokes certain associations in the reader's mind. Both *bi* and *xing* relate to comparisons between two things, but the former is associated with the more obvious, whereas the latter is concerned with the subtler. The boundary between the two, however, is sometimes not clear-cut. In the *Shijing*, objects or situations are merely juxtaposed. Any connections between them are evoked by their proximity, and there is no attempt in the text to direct our interpretation in a certain way. In the preceding and other passages in "On Encountering Trouble," however, the poet explicitly informs his audience that a certain object or situation is intended to be compared with another. If *xing* is the dominant trope in the *Shijing*, "On Encountering Trouble" presents *bi* as its central device.

Since early times, critics have identified this *xiangcao meiren* trope as the central symbolic device in "On Encountering Trouble" and have used it as a guide to their allegorical readings of the poem. Wang Yi, for example, claimed that "On Encountering Trouble" "draws on types to make comparisons. Thus fine birds and fragrant plants [are used to] equate loyalty and steadfastness, wicked creatures and foul objects [are used to] compare with slanderous and villainous people, and godly and fair ones [are used to] equate with the monarch.... Dragon steeds, heavenly birds, and phoenixes [are used to] represent gentlemen, and whirlwinds and clouds [are used to] refer to villains."<sup>19</sup> This method of symbolic presentation has had tremendous influences on both the creation and the interpretation of Chinese poetry.

At the end of this section, the poet offers himself as a guide to "show the way" to his king. This prepares us for the numerous journeys on which the poet will take *us* throughout the poem in his quest for his ideals:

25 The three kings of old were most pure and perfect,<sup>20</sup>  
Then indeed fragrant flowers had their proper place.  
They brought together pepper and cinnamon,  
And had more than mere heliotrope and angelica.

昔三后之純粹兮	(xī sān hòu zhī chún cuì xì)
固眾芳之所在	(gù zhòng fāng zhī suǒ zài)
雜申椒與菌桂兮	(zá shēng jiāo yǔ jūn guì xì)
豈維紉夫蕙茝	(qǐ wéi rèn fú huì zhǐ)



	Glorious and great were Yao and Shun, <sup>21</sup>	彼堯舜之耿介兮	(bǐ yáo shùn zhī gěng jiè xi)
30	Because they had kept their feet on the right path.	既遵道而得路	(jì zūn dào ér dé lù)
	And how great was the folly of Jie and Zhou, <sup>22</sup>	何桀紂之猖披兮	(hé jié zhòu zhī chāng pī xi)
	They hastened by crooked paths, facing perils at each step.	夫唯捷徑以窘步	(fú wéi jié jìng yǐ jiǒng bù)
	Men of faction may enjoy their stolen pleasures	惟夫黨人之偷樂兮	(wéi fú dǎng rén zhī tōu lè xi)
	But their way is dark and leads to danger.	路幽昧以險隘	(lù yōu mèi yǐ xiǎn ài)
35	I have no fear for the peril of my own person,	豈余身之憚殃兮	(qǐ yú shēng zhī dàn yāng xi)
	But only lest the chariot of my lord should be dashed.	恐皇輿之敗績	(kǒng huáng yú zhī bài jī)
	I hurried about your chariot in attendance,	忽奔走以先後兮	(hū bēn zǒu yǐ xiān hòu xi)
	Leading you in the tracks of the kings of old,	及前王之踵武	(jí qiáng wáng zhī zhōng wǔ)
	But the Fragrant One refused to examine my true feelings,	荃不察余之中情兮	(quán bù chá yú zhī zhōng qíng xi)
40	He lent ear instead to slander, and raged against me.	反信讒而齎怒	(fǎn xìn chán ér jì nù)
	How well I know that loyalty brings disaster,	余固知謇謇之為患兮	(yú gù zhī jiǎn jiǎn zhī wéi huàn xi)
	Yet I will endure: I will not give up.	忍而不能舍也	(rěn ěr bù néng shě yě)
	I called on the nine-fold heaven to be my witness,	指九天以為正兮	(zhǐ jiǔ tiān yǐ wéi zhèng xi)
	And all for the sake of the Godly One, and no other.	夫唯靈脩之故也	(fú wéi líng xiū zhī gù yě)
45	Once he spoke with me in frankness,	初既與余成言兮	(chū jì yǔ yú chéng yán xi)
	But then he repented and was of another mind.	後悔遁而有他	(hòu huǐ dùn ěr yǒu tā)
	I do not care, on my own account, of this divorcement,	余既不難夫離別兮	(yú jì bù nán fú lí bié xi)
	But it grieves me to find the Godly so inconstant.	傷靈脩之數化	(shāng líng xiū zhī shù huà)

The poet, however, is denied the chance to guide his king because the king has “refused to examine [the poet’s] true feelings.” Not only that, he has “lent ear instead to slander, and raged against” the poet. In order to persuade his king to change his way, Qu Yuan looks back in history. He cites both positive and negative examples from the past so that his king may learn a lesson from them. Historical references such as these have found acceptance among critics. Liu Xie, for example, singled them out and praised their adherence to the classics. In this passage, the poet also provides some information about his relationship with King Huai, whom he addresses variously as the “Fragrant One” (*quan*) and “Godly One” (*lingxiu*). *Quan* is a kind of fragrant plant, and *ling* is often used to refer to matters related to a shaman or shamanism in the *Chuci*. As we shall see in the poem, Qu Yuan draws heavily on these two sources for his symbolism:

	I had tended many an acre of orchids,	余既滋蘭之九畹兮	(yú jì zī lán zhī jiǔ wǎn xī)
50	And planted a hundred rods of melilotus.	又樹蕙之百畝	(yòu shù huì zhī bǎi mǔ)
	I had raised sweet lichens and the cart halting flower,	畦留夷與揭車兮	(qí liú yí yǔ jiē chē xī)
	And asarums mingled with fragrant angelica.	雜杜衡與方芷	(zá dù héng yǔ fāng zhǐ)
	And hoped that when leaf and stem were in their full prime,	冀枝葉之峻茂兮	(jì zhī yè zhī jùn mào xī)
	When the time had come, I would reap a fine harvest.	愿俟時乎吾將刈	(yuàn sì shí hū wú jiāng yì)
55	Though they wither and die, how would that hurt me?	雖萎絕其亦何傷兮	(suī wěi jué qí yì hé shāng xī)
	But I grieve to see these blossoms waste in rank weeds.	哀眾芳之蕪穢	(āi zhòng fāng zhī wú huì)
	All others press forward in greed and gluttony,	眾皆競進以貪婪兮	(zhòng jiē jìng jìn yǐ tān lán xī)
	No surfeit satiating their demands:	憑不厭乎求索	(píng bú yàn hū qiú suǒ)
	Forgiving themselves, but harshly judging others,	羌內恕己以量人兮	(qiāng nèi shù jǐ yǐ liáng rén xī)
60	Each fretting his heart away in envy and malice.	各興心而嫉妒	(gè xīng xīn ér jí dù)
	Madly they rush in the covetous chase,	忽馳騫以追逐兮	(hū chí wù yǐ zhuī zhuí xī)
	But not after that which my heart sets store by.	非余心之所急	(fēi yú xīn zhī suǒ jí)
	For old age comes creeping and soon will be upon me,	老冉冉其將至兮	(lǎo rǎn rǎn qí jiāng zhì xī)
	And I fear I shall not leave behind an enduring name.	恐脩名之不立	(kǒng xiū míng zhī bù lì)
65	In the morning I drank the dew that fell from the magnolia,	朝飲木蘭之墜露兮	(zhāo yǐn mù lán zhī zhuì lù xī)
	At evening ate the petals that dropped from chrysanthemums,	夕餐秋菊之落英	(xī cān qiū jú zhī luò yīng)
	If only my mind can be truly pure and beautiful,	苟余情其信姱以練要兮	(gǒu yú qíng qí xìn kuā yǐ liàn yào xī)
	It matters nothing that I often faint for famine.	長顛顛亦何傷	(cháng kǎn hàn yì hé shāng)
	I pulled up roots to bind the valerian,	攀木根以結莖兮	(pān mù gēn yǐ jié zhī xī)
70	And thread the castor plant's fallen clusters with.	貫薜荔之落蕊	(guàn pì lì zhī luò ruǐ)
	I trimmed sprays of cassia for plaiting melilotus,	矯菌桂以紉蕙兮	(jiǎo jūn guì yǐ rèn huì xī)
	And knotted the lithe, light trails of ivy.	索胡繩之纖纒	(suǒ hú shéng zhī lí lí)
	I take my fashion from the good men of old:	蹇吾法夫前脩兮	(jiǎn wú fǎ fū qián xiū xī)
	A garb unlike that which the rude world cares for.	非世俗之所服	(fēi shì sú zhī suǒ fú)
75	Though it may not accord with present-day manners,	雖不周于今之人兮	(suī bù zhōu yú jīn zhī rén xī)
	I will follow the model that Peng Xian has left.	願依彭咸之遺則	(yuàn yī péng xián zhī yí zé)

This section continues to develop the theme of moral cultivation in conjunction with the floral symbolism introduced earlier, but with a twist. The various flowers and plants mentioned in lines 49–52 seem to represent not only the poet himself but also his former comrades. Despite his constant efforts in “cultivating” them, most in the end failed him, making him “grieve to see these blossoms waste in rank weeds.” But the poet is undeterred by their shameful transformation and forges ahead with his good care of the fragrant flowers (lines 69–72). Lines 64 and 65 take up again the introduced motif of the quick, irrevocable passage of time, but this time the poet specifies for us the fear that it causes in him,



which is that he may not be able to “leave behind an enduring name.” This reiterates his desire to “show the way” to his king and serve his state, which was regarded as one of the best means of passing one’s name down to posterity in ancient China. But then a few lines later, his alienation from the world around him causes him to ponder another radical alternative: to leave it behind altogether. The reference to Peng Xian in line 76 is ambiguous because of his duality as a historical figure and a shaman master. The dominant view, advanced by Wang Yi, is that Peng Xian was an upright minister during the Shang dynasty. When his loyal advice to his king was ignored, he drowned himself in protest. Another view is that he was a master shaman in the ancient past and that the reference to him indicates Qu Yuan’s desire to leave the world behind him by becoming a shaman. Qu Yuan’s reference to Peng Xian may be a signal to the reader that he, too, would commit suicide in protest, but the dual identity of Peng Xian illustrates the close link between the historical and shamanistic aspects of the poem. This will be further illustrated as we journey with the poet into the historical past and to the supernatural heavens.

	Heaving a long sigh, I brush away my tears, Sad that man’s life should be so beset with hardship. Though goodness and beauty were my bit and bridle,	長太息以掩涕兮 哀民生之多艱 余雖好姱婁以鞿羈兮	(cháng tài xī yǐ yǎn tì xī) (āi mín shēng zhī duō jiān) (yú suī hào xiū kuā yǐ jī jī xī)
80	I was slandered in the morning and cast off that same evening. Yet, though cast off, I would wear my orchid girdle, I would pluck some angelicas to add to its beauty. For this it is that my heart takes most delight in, And though I die nine times, I should not regret it.	謗朝諝而夕替 既替余以蕙纕兮 又申之以攬茝 亦余心之所善兮 雖九死其猶未悔	(jiǎn zhāo suì ér xī tì) (jì tì yú yǐ huì xiāng xī) (yòu shēn zhī yǐ lǎn zhǐ) (yì yú xīn zhī suǒ shàn xī) (suī jiǔ sǐ qí yóu wèi huǐ)
85	What I regret is the Fair One’s waywardness, That never once stops to ask what is in people’s minds. All your ladies were jealous of my delicate beauty, In their spiteful chattering they said I was a wanton. Truly this generation are cunning artificers,	怨靈脩之浩蕩兮 終不察夫民心 眾女嫉余之蛾眉兮 謠諑謂余以善淫 固時俗之工巧兮 偃規矩而改錯	(yuàn líng xiū zhī hào dàng xī) (zhōng bù chá fú mín xīn) (zhòng nǚ jí yú zhī é méi xī) (yáo zhuó wèi yú yǐ shàn yín) (gù shí sú zhī gōng qiǎo xī) (miǎn guī jǔ ér gǎi cuò)
90	They reject rules to fashion their own measurements. They disregard ruled lines to follow their crooked fancies, And to emulate in flattery is their only principle. But I am sick and sad at heart and stand irresolute: I alone am at loss in this generation.	背繩墨以追曲兮 競周容以為度 忼鬱邑余侘傺兮 吾獨窮困乎此時也	(bèi shéng mò yǐ zhuī qū xī) (jìng zhōu róng yǐ wéi dù) (tūn yù yì yú chà chì xī) (wú dú qióng kùn hū cǐ shí yě)
95	Yet I would rather quickly die and meet dissolution, Before I ever would consent to ape <i>their</i> behavior.	寧溘死以流亡兮 余不忍為此態也	(níng kè sǐ yǐ liú wáng xī) (yú bù rěn wéi cǐ tài yě)

The couplet that begins this section (lines 77–78) conjures up the image of someone deeply saddened by the hardship of ordinary people. It is this image that has helped to make Qu Yuan into a national hero of China, whose long history has been filled with human suffering. In lines 87 and 88, the poet explicitly compares himself with a woman slandered by other women because of jealousy of her outstanding beauty. This is a further elaboration of the equation of beauty (represented by various flowers in earlier passages) with virtue. In Chinese culture, there is an ancient tradition of comparing a government minister with a wife: a minister is to a monarch as a wife is to a husband. Thus Qu Yuan's deliberate twist of gender identity is not new. What is new is his effort to make this an integral part of his symbolism in general. Indeed, "On Encountering Trouble" demonstrates a keen interest in exploiting the ambiguities caused by dual identities. We have already seen this in the poet's allusion to his king as both the "Fair One" and the "Godly One," and in the historical and shamanistic dimensions of Peng Xian. We will see more such examples later in the poem.

In lines 97–128 (omitted), Qu Yuan continues to emphasize his alienation from society. He also repeats his determination to follow his principles and not to compromise his integrity, even though it means the sacrifice of his life. But in lines 111 and 112, Qu Yuan seems to indicate another, less radical solution to his dilemma. If he cannot help his king (*jīn* [literally, to enter] is often used to refer to gaining a post in the government), he might as well retire (*tūi* [to retire or withdraw]) so that he can pursue his love and cultivation of beauty and virtue—that is, become a recluse: "I could not go in to him for fear of meeting trouble, / And so, retired, I would once more fashion my former raiment" (lines 111–112).

Up to now, there has been little movement in the poem. What we have had so far is a long speech or monologue of the poet. Starting from this section, however, the poet becomes increasingly restless, trying to decide what step to take next. We find him

... halted, intending to turn back again—  
To turn about my chariot and retrace my road  
Before I had advanced too far along the path of folly. (lines 107–109)

At one point, he "suddenly turned back" to let his "eyes wander," and "resolved to go and visit all the world's quarters" (line 121). The text is

signaling to us that more dramatic passages will follow.

	The woman was fearful and clung to me imploringly, <sup>23</sup>	女嬃之嬋媛兮	(nǚ xū zhī chán yuán xi)
130	Lifting her voice up in expostulation:	申申其詈予	(shēn shēn qí lì yú)
	"Gun in his stubbornness took no thought for his life,	曰鯀婞直以亡身兮	(yuē gǔn xìng zhí yǐ wáng shēng xi)
	And perished, as result, on the moor of Feather Mountain. <sup>24</sup>	終然殛乎羽之野	(zhōng rán yāo hū yǔ zhī yě)
	Why be so lofty, with your passion for purity?	汝何博謇而好脩兮	(rǔ hé bó jiǎn ér hào xiū xi)
	Why must you alone have such delicate adornment?	紛獨有此姱節	(fēn dú yǒu cǐ kuā jié)
135	Thorns, king grass, curly ear fill the palace chambers now,	賁茝薺以盈室兮	(cí lù shī yǐ yíng shì xi)
	You alone stand aloof and refuse to wear them.	判獨離而不服	(pàn dú lí ér bù fú)
	You cannot go from door to door convincing everybody;	眾不可戶說兮	(zhòng bù kě hù shuì xi)
	No one can say to others: 'Look into my mind!'	孰云察余之中情	(shú yún chá yú zhī zhōng qíng)
	People band together and like to have companions,	世并舉而好朋兮	(shì bìng jǔ ér hào péng xi)
140	Why must you be so aloof? Why not heed my counsel?"	夫何羣獨而不予聽	(fú hé qióng dú ér bù yú tīng)

This passage further develops and emphasizes one of the dominant themes of the poem: the poet's alienation from society. However, inasmuch as it is cast in the form of a speech by a sympathetic woman, it allows us to see the alienation from another perspective. It demonstrates that it is not just his king and political enemies who do not understand him; even those who are clearly concerned with the poet's well-being have misgivings about his principles. The woman's advice for Qu Yuan to follow society's tides is similar to that given to him by a fisherman, as recorded by Sima Qian in his biography of the poet. At another level, the introduction of a speech by another character briefly interrupts the poet's lengthy monologue. It brings in a certain dramatic element and relieves the poem's monotony. The woman's speech attempts to bring about an exchange with the poet, but this potential does not materialize because, as we shall see, instead of answering the woman's questions and concerns, the poet turns his attention elsewhere. The woman disappears from the poem.

In the next section, lines 141–182 (omitted), the poet, as if aware of the difficulty of explaining his situation to a contemporary, takes his case directly to **Shun**, one of the most revered ancient sage-rulers. He tells Shun that, unlike in the past, when justice was rewarded and evil punished, his own time is thoroughly out of order. Then, the poet "yoked a team of jade dragons to a phoenix-figured car / And waited for the wind to come, to soar upon my journey" (lines 183–184). What follows is the poem's first heavenly trip, one of the most fantastic sections in the poem:

185	I started out in the morning on my way from Cang-wu, By evening I had arrived at the Hanging Garden. <sup>25</sup> I wanted to stay a while in those fairy precincts, But the swift-moving sun was dipping to the west. I ordered Xi He to stay the sun-steeds' gallop, <sup>26</sup>	朝發軔于蒼梧兮 夕余至乎縣圃 欲少留此靈瑱兮 日忽忽其將暮 吾令羲和弭節兮	(zhāo fā rèn yú cāng wú xī) (xī yú zhì hū xuán pǔ) (yù shǎo liú cǐ líng suǒ xī) (rì hū hū qí jiāng mù) (wú lìng xī hé mǐ jié xī)
190	To stand over Yan-zi Mountain and not go in; <sup>27</sup> For the road was so far and so distant was my journey, And I wanted to go up and down, seeking my heart's desire. I watered my dragon steeds at the Pool of Heaven, <sup>28</sup> And tied their reigns up to the Fu-sang tree. <sup>29</sup>	望崦嵫而勿迫 路曼曼其脩遠兮 吾將上下而求索 飲余馬于咸池兮 總余轡乎扶桑	(wàng yān zī ér wù pò) (lù màn màn qí xiū yuǎn xī) (wú jiāng shàng xià ér qiú suǒ) (yìnyú mǎ yú xián chí xī) (zǒngyú pèihū fúsāng)
195	I broke a sprig of the Ruo tree to strike the sun with, <sup>30</sup> First I would roam a little for my enjoyment. I sent Wang Shu ahead to ride before me, <sup>31</sup> Fei Lian went behind me as my outrider. <sup>32</sup> The Bird of Heaven gave notice of my comings; <sup>33</sup>	折若木以拂日兮 聊逍遙以相羊 前望舒使先驅兮 后飛廉使奔屬 鸞皇為余先戒兮	(zhé ruò mù yǐ fú rì xī) (liáoxiāo yáo yǐ xiāng yáng) (qián wàng shū shǐ xiān qū xī) (hòu fēi lián shǐ bēn zhǔ) (luán huáng wèi yú xiān jiè xī)
200	The Thunder God warned me when all was not ready. I ordered my phoenixes to mount on their pinions And fly ever onward by night and by day. The whirlwinds gathered and came out to meet me, Leading clouds and rainbows, to give me welcome.	雷師告余以未具 吾令鳳鳥飛騰兮 繼之以日夜 飄風屯其相離兮 帥雲霓而來御	(léi shī gào yú yǐ wèi jù) (wú lìng fēng niǎo fēi téng xī) (jì zhī yǐ rì yè) (piāo fēng tún qí xiāng lí xī) (shuài yún ní ér lái yù)
205	In wild confusion, now joined and now parted, Upward and downward rushed the glittering train. I ordered Heaven's porter to open up for me; But he leant across Heaven's gate and eyed me churlishly. The day was getting dark and drawing to its close,	紛總總其離合兮 斑陸離其上下 吾令帝閭開關兮 倚閭闔而望予 時曖曖其將罷兮	(fēn zǒng zǒng qí lí hé xī) (bān lù lí qí shàng xià) (wú lìng dì hūn kāi guān xī) (yǐ chāng hé ér wàng yú) (shí ài ài qí jiāng bà xī)
210	Knotting orchids, I waited in indecision.	結幽蘭而延佇	(jié yōu lán ér yán zhù)

As I have noted, spiritual and imaginary journeys (or “flights,” to use David Hawkes’s term) are essential components of shamanistic rituals. In order to seek help from the supernatural realm (in finding love, curing the sick, summoning back the dead, obtaining blessings of spirits, and so on), shamans often would engage in a performance and depart from their bodies to meet with the spirits. “The Lord of the Xiang River” and “The Lady of the Xiang River” describe such journeys. In fact, what we seem to have in this and other passages of “On Encountering Trouble” is further elaborations on those earlier models. Since, for whatever reason, these flights often end in frustration and melancholy, they have a thematic affinity with Qu Yuan’s poem—which is about “encountering trouble.” As we shall see, Qu Yuan takes advantage of this connection and uses it to accentuate his theme, which is his loneliness and total alienation from the world.

The rich style, fantastic imagery, and great imaginativeness of this

section are unprecedented in the Chinese poetry of Qu Yuan's time. They make the poems in the *Shijing* look sober and restrained in comparison. Many critics, such as Wang Yi, have tried to tame the poem and its special characteristics through allegorical readings. Others have found the poem's style objectionable. Liu Xie, for example, accused such writing of being "outlandish" and regarded it as an "aberration from the classics." However, this poem came to represent one of the *Chuci*'s most enduring influences and greatest contributions to Chinese poetry.

Undaunted by his failure to enter heaven, the poet continues his search, but now he is looking for something different:

<p>The world is muddy, impure and indiscriminating, It seeks always to hide beauty out of jealousy. I decided when morning came to cross the White Water, And climbed the peak of Lang-feng, and there tied up my steeds.<sup>34</sup></p>	<p>世溷濁而不分兮 (shì hùn zhuó ér bù fēn xi) 好蔽美而嫉妒 (hào bì měi ér jì dù) 朝吾將濟於白水兮 (zhāo wú jiāng jì yú bái shuǐ xi)</p>
<p>215 Then I looked about me and suddenly burst out weeping, Because on the high hill there was no fair lady. Here I am, suddenly, in this House of Spring,<sup>35</sup> I have broken off a jasper branch to add to my girdle. Before the flowers have shed their bright petals, 220 I shall look for a maiden below to give to. So I ordered Feng Long to ride off on a cloud,<sup>36</sup> To seek out the dwelling-place of the lady Fu Fei.<sup>37</sup> I took off my girdle as a pledge of my suit to her, And ordered Jianxiu to be the go-between.<sup>38</sup></p>	<p>登閭風而縲馬 (dēng lǎng fēng ér xiè mǎ) 忽反顧以流涕兮 (hū fǎn gù yǐ liú tì xi) 哀高丘之無女 (āi gāo qiū zhī wú nǚ) 漁吾遊此春宮兮 (kè wú yóu cǐ chūn gōng xi) 折瓊枝以繼佩 (zhé qióng zhī jì pèi) 及榮華之未落兮 (jí róng huá zhī wèi luò xi) 相下女之可詒 (xiāng xià nǚ zhī kě yí) 吾令豐隆乘雲兮 (wú lìng fēng lóng chéng yún xi) 求宓妃之所在 (qiú fú fēi zhī suǒ zài) 解佩纕以結言兮 (jiě pèi xiāng yǐ jié yán xi) 吾令蹇脍以為理 (wú lìng jiǎn xiū yǐ wéi lǐ)</p>
<p>225 Many were the hurried meetings and partings, All wills and caprices, she was hard to woo. In the evenings she went to lodge in the Qiong-shi Mountain, In the mornings she washed her hair in the Wei-pan Stream.<sup>39</sup> With proud disdain she guards her beauty,</p>	<p>紛總總其離合兮 (fēn zǒng zǒng qí lí hé xi) 忽緯繡其難遷 (hū wěi huà qí nán qiān) 夕歸次於窮石兮 (xī guī cì yú qióng shí xi) 朝濯髮乎洧盤 (zhāo zhuó fà hū wěi pán) 保厥美以驕傲兮 (bǎo jué měi yǐ jiāo ào xi)</p>
<p>230 Passing each day in idle, wanton pleasures. Though fair she may be, she lacks all seemliness, Come! I'll have none of her; let us search elsewhere!</p>	<p>日康娛以淫遊 (rì kāng yú yǐ yín yóu) 雖信美而無禮兮 (suī xìn měi ér wú lǐ xi) 來違棄而改求 (lái wěi qì ér gǎi qiú)</p>

His frustrations in heaven make the poet return his attention to the world, but what a "muddy, impure" place he finds it to be! To escape it, he embarks on another journey, but this time the object of his search is Fu Fei, the beautiful goddess of the Luo River. His hoped-for result fails, however, because, despite all her beauty, Fu Fei turns out to be "wanton" and "lacks all seemliness."

With the change of the search object in this section, the poem's metaphor changes as well, and, with it, the speaker's gender. Now the search is presented as a courtship, a man seeking his female mate. This reverses the gender relationship that the poet had with the "Godly One," where he compared himself with a female of outstanding beauty slandered by jealous court ladies. This inevitably causes confusion in the allegorical framework of the poem and has generated much debate among commentators. The Song dynasty critic Zhu Xi (1130–1200) maintained that the women (Fu Fei and the other two women in the next section) "are divine women, and they therefore represent virtuous rulers." But You Guoen and other modern scholars have regarded this and the following "courtship searches" as allegories of the poet's efforts to find someone close to the king who could help to bring him back to the capital.<sup>40</sup> Whatever the case may be, the gender relationships in the poem become increasingly complex. The complexity, though, does not seem to distract from the central motif of the poem: the poet is still searching for someone who shares his ideals.

In lines 233–256 (omitted), the poet continues his search for a "fair lady." The object in this section is the "lovely daughter of the Lord of Song." This search also fails because the poet finds "my pleader was weak and my matchmaker stupid" (line 249). At the end of this passage, Qu Yuan draws a parallel between these failed searches and his inability to wake up his "wise king."

Somewhat baffled by his failures, the poet decides to seek help from divination:

I searched for the holy plant and twigs of bamboo, And ordered Ling Fen to make divination for me. <sup>41</sup> He said, "Beauty is always bound to find its mate: 260 Who that was truly fair was ever without lovers? Think of the vastness of the wide world, Here is not the only place where you can find your lady. Go farther afield," he said, "and do not be faint-hearted. What woman seeking handsome mate could ever refuse you? 265 What place on earth does not boast some fragrant flower? Why need you always cleave to your old home? The world today is blinded with its own folly,	索薷茅以筮蓍兮 命靈氛為余占之 曰兩美其必合兮 孰信脩而慕之 九州之博大兮 豈唯是其有女 曰勉遠逝而無狐疑兮 孰求美而釋女 何所獨無芳草兮 爾何懷乎故宇 世幽昧以眩曜兮	(suǒ qióng máo yǐ tíng zhuān xī) (mìng líng fēn wèi yú zhān zhī) (yuē liǎng měi qí bì hé xī) (shú xìn xiū ér mù zhī) (jiǔ zhōu zhī bó dà xī) (qǐ wéi shì qí yǒu nǚ) (yuē miǎn yuǎn shìér wú hú yí xī) (shú qiú měi ér shì nǚ) (hé suǒ dú wú fāng cǎo xī) (ěr hé huái hū gù yǔ) (shì yōu mèi yǐ xuàn yào xī)
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	You cannot make people see the virtue inside you.	孰云察余之善惡	(shú yún chá yúzhī shàn è)
	Most people's loathings and likings are different,	民好惡其不同兮	(mín hào wù qí bù tóng xī)
270	But these men of factions are not as others are.	惟此黨人其獨異	(wéi cǐ dǎng rén qí dú yì)
	For they wear mugwort and cram their waistbands with it,	戶服艾以盈要兮	(hù fú ài yǐ yíng yào xī)
	But the lovely valley orchids they deem unfit to wear.	謂幽蘭其不可佩	(wèi yōu lán qí bù kě pèi)
	Since beauty of flower, then, and of shrub escapes them,	覽察草木其猶未得兮	(lǎn chá cǎo mù qí yóu wèi dé xī)
	What chance has a rarest jewel of gaining recognition?	豈瑾美之能當	(qǐ chéng měi zhī néng dāng)
275	They gather up muck to stuff their perfume bags with,	蘇糞壤以充幃兮	(sū fèn rǎng yǐ chōng wéi xī)
	The spicy pepper-plant they say has got no scent at all."	謂申椒其不芳	(wèi shēn jiāo qí bù fāng)

Master Ling Fen's oracle essentially repeats what Qu Yuan has been saying all along—that he possesses outstanding beauty, but this “blinded” world simply fails to appreciate it. The advice he offers is similar to that given by the woman earlier: he should not be too stubborn in the pursuit of his ideals, for if he is flexible in his mind, he will surely find what he wants. This flexible attitude, however, entails forgoing the poet's loyalty to his monarch and his attachment to his “old home.” As we shall see, this is the ultimate sacrifice that the poet is unable to make.

It is noteworthy that Ling Fen's criticism of the world is presented in floral images and metaphors similar to those that the poet has used in describing his differences from the rest of the world. He and Qu Yuan are nearly of the same mind, except for their different attitudes regarding one's relation to the state. This again helps to emphasize the poet's outstanding quality and the alienation it causes him.

In the next section, lines 277–332 (omitted), the poet, although desiring to follow Ling Fen's words, “faltered and could not make up his mind” (line 277), so he seeks advice from Wu Xian, the master shaman. Wu Xian's counsel essentially echoes that of the others: “As long as your soul within is beautiful, / What need have you of a matchmaker?” (lines 289–290). Wu Xian's message is conveyed through several examples from ancient Chinese history. This combination of shamanism and history again blurs the boundary between the two.

The counsels of Ling Fen and Wu Xian cause the poet to contemplate his life. What follows is a reflective passage that repeats the main themes and motifs introduced earlier: his steadfast pursuit of beauty and virtue and the rifts this pursuit has caused between him and the world, whose only aim is self-advancement. In this passage, the poet weaves yet another twist in his floral symbolism. Now, the beautiful and fragrant flowers are portrayed as undergoing transformations not from budding to blooming to fading, which would be natural, but from “fragrant plants” to

“worthless mugwort”: “Why have all the fragrant flowers of days gone by / Now all transformed themselves into worthless mugwort?” (lines 309–310). It is evident that the poet is speaking metaphorically, and we are thus led to read this part of the text allegorically. Critics have interpreted this section as the poet’s deploring the shameful vacillations of his former comrades in their power struggles at court. Disillusioned, the poet finally decides to heed the counsels of Ling Fen and Wu Xian and to “travel around looking both high and low” for the “lady” who has eluded him in his previous journeys. This introduces the last shamanistic flight of the poem:



Since Ling Fen had given me a favorable oracle,  
 I picked an auspicious day to start my journey on.  
 335 I broke a branch of jasper to take for my meat,  
 And ground fine jasper meal for my journey's provisions.  
 Harness winged dragons to be my coursers,  
 Let my chariot be of fine work of jade and ivory!  
 How can I live with men whose hearts are strangers to me?  
 340 I am going on a far journey to be away from them.  
 I took the way toward the Kun-lun Mountain,  
 A long, long road with many a turning in it.  
 The cloud-embroidered banner flapped its great shade  
 above us,  
 And the jingling jade yoke-bells tinkled merrily.  
 345 I set off at morning from the Ford of Heaven,<sup>42</sup>  
 At evening I came to the world's western end.  
 Phoenixes followed me, bearing up my pennants,  
 Soaring high with majestic wing-beats.  
 Suddenly my route took me to the Flowing Sands,  
 350 Warily I drove along the banks of the Red Waters.  
 Then, beckoning the water-dragon to make a bridge for me,  
 I summoned the God of the West to take me over.<sup>43</sup>  
 So long the road had been and full of difficulties,  
 I sent word to my escort to take another route,  
 355 To wheel around leftward, skirting Bu-zhou Mountain,<sup>44</sup>  
 On the shore of the Western Sea we would reassemble.  
 When we had mustered there, all thousand chariots,  
 Jade hub to jade hub we galloped on abreast.  
 My eight dragon steeds flew on with writhing undulations,  
 360 My cloud-embroidered banners flapped on the wind.  
 In vain I tried to curb them, to slacken the swift pace,  
 The spirits soared high up, far into the distance,  
 We played the Nine Songs and danced to the Shao music,<sup>45</sup>  
 Borrowing the time to make a holiday.  
 365 But when I had ascended the splendor of the heavens,  
 I suddenly caught a glimpse of my old home.  
 My groom's heart was heavy and the horses for longing  
 Arched their heads back and refused to go on.

靈氛既告余以吉占兮 (líng fēn jì gào yú yǐ jí zhān xī)  
 歷吉日乎吾將行 (lì jí rì hū wú jiāng xíng)  
 折瓊枝以為羞兮 (zhé qióng zhī yǐ wéi xiū xī)  
 精瓊糜以為糧 (jīng qióng mí yǐ wéi zhāng)  
 為余駕飛龍兮 (wèi yú jià fēi lóng xī)  
 雜瑤象以為車 (zá yáo xiàng yǐ wéi chē)  
 何離心之可同兮 (hé lí xīn zhī kě tóng xī)  
 吾將遠逝以自疏 (wú jiāng yuǎn shì yǐ zì shū)  
 遠吾道夫崑崙兮 (zhān wú dào fú kūn lún xī)  
 路脩遠以周流 (lù xiū yuǎn yǐ zhōu liú)  
 揚雲霓之晻藹兮 (yáng yún ní zhī yǎn ǎi xī)  
 鳴玉鸞之啾啾 (míng yù luán zhī jiū jiū)  
 朝發軔于天津兮 (zhāo fā rèn yú tiān jīn xī)  
 夕余至乎西極 (xī yú zhì hū xī jí)  
 鳳皇翼其承旂兮 (fèng huáng yì qí chéng qí xī)  
 高翱翔之翼翼 (gāo áo xiáng zhī yì yì)  
 忽吾行此流沙兮 (hū wú xíng cǐ liú shā xī)  
 遵赤水而容與 (zūn chì shuǐ ér róng yǔ)  
 麾蛟龍使梁津兮 (huī jiāo lóng shǐ liáng jīn xī)  
 詔西皇使涉予 (zhào xī huáng shǐ shè yú)  
 路脩遠以多艱兮 (lù xiū yuǎn yǐ duō jiān xī)  
 騰眾車使徑待 (téng zhòng chē shǐ jìng dài)  
 路不周以左轉兮 (lù bù zhōu yǐ zuǒ zhuǎn xī)  
 指西海以為期 (zhǐ xī hǎi yǐ wéi qī)  
 屯余車其千乘兮 (tún yú chē qí qiān shèng xī)  
 齊玉軛而并馳 (qí yù dài ér bìng chí)  
 駕八龍之婉婉兮 (jià bā lóng zhī wǎn wǎn xī)  
 載雲旗之委蛇 (zài yún qí zhī wēi yí)  
 抑志而弭節兮 (yì zhì ér mǐ jié xī)  
 神高馳之邈邈 (shén gāo chí zhī miǎo miǎo)  
 奏九歌而舞韶兮 (zòu jiǔ gē ér wǔ sháo xī)  
 聊假日以愉樂 (liáo jià rì yǐ yù lè)  
 陟升皇之赫戲兮 (zhì shēng huáng zhī hè xì xī)  
 忽臨睨夫舊鄉 (hū lín nì fú jiù xiāng)  
 僕夫悲余馬懷兮 (pú fū bēi yú mǎ huái xī)  
 馳局顧而不行 (quán jú gù ér bù xíng)

The purpose of this “far journey,” the poet informs us, is “to be away from” the blinded world and its benighted people. For a moment, the poet seems to have done just that. Pulled by his dragon steeds, accompanied by phoenixes and other supernatural creatures, the poet travels much farther this time, to the extreme far west of the world. At the peak of this dazzling journey, however, just as the poet “had ascended the splendor of the heavens,” he cannot but suddenly look down at his “old home.” This seemingly inadvertent act causes the sudden halt and subsequent collapse of this most fantastic “far journey.” Despite all the power and majesty, heavenly trips such as this pale in comparison with the poet’s mundane longing for his “old home.” Such supernatural flights are intended to transcend the world and its imperfections, but in the end, they serve to foreground the poet’s stubborn and powerful attachment to it. In other words, the splendid paraphernalia of shamanism are appropriated by the poet to promote a fundamentally humanistic theme, which is his profound engagement with the human world.

<i>Luan</i> <sup>46</sup>	亂曰	(luàn yuē)
Enough!	已矣哉	(yǐ yǐ zāi)
There are no true men in the state: no one understands me.	國無人莫我知兮	(guó wú rén mò wǒ zhī xī)
370 Why should I cleave to the city of my birth?	又何懷乎故都	(yòu hé huái hū gù dū)
Since none is worthy to work with in making good government	莫足與為美政兮	(mò zú yǔ wéi měi zhèng xī)
I shall go and join Peng Xian in the place where he abides.	吾將從彭咸之所居	(wú jiāng cóng péng xián zhī suǒ jū)

[CCBZ, 3–47]<sup>47</sup>

The last section, which is equivalent to a coda in a musical performance, sums up the theme of the poem. The poet reiterates his alienation from the world and states again his wish to “join Peng Xian in the place where he abides.” As indicated earlier, most critics regard this to be Qu Yuan’s statement of his intention to commit suicide, although some consider it to be the expression of his desire to become a shaman and spend the rest of his life as a recluse. It is important to note that what prompts this act is the poet’s realization that in this world “none is worthy to work with in making good government.” This situates the poem in the context of the human world. It also helps to “naturalize” or render normal the fantastic and unconventional elements of the poem, such as those inspired by shamanism and its rituals.

“On Encountering Trouble” is one of the longest poems in the Chinese

poetic tradition, but, as we have seen, it is also repetitive in many of its sections. The repetitiveness of the text seems to serve a purpose, which is to stress the poet's constant efforts to uphold his principles in the face of constant persecution by his enemies. It also helps to emphasize the difficult decisions that he had to make in a world he saw as unjust. Throughout Chinese history, many intellectuals often found themselves in similar situations. For those familiar with "On Encountering Trouble," the poem portrayed an experience with which they could identify. Its beautiful language and dazzling journeys provided them with momentary relief from the pressing hardships of life. Qu Yuan's railings against the injustice of the world offered them a means to vent their frustrations and anger, especially in later ages, when such relief often could be had only vicariously through a text. And, finally, Qu Yuan's example demonstrated to them that virtue and beauty often go unappreciated, and that they were not alone in their misfortunes, thus making the sufferings of life more bearable. In sum, "On Encountering Trouble" provided both poetic inspiration and emotional catharsis to later generations. This has ensured it a major place in the history of Chinese literature.

Fusheng Wu

#### NOTES

1. Quoted in Wang Yi and Hong Xingzu, eds., *Chuci buzhu (Further Annotated Edition of the "Chuci")* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 49. Unless indicated otherwise, all citations of the *Chuci* are from this edition.

2. Fan Wenlan, ed., *Wenxin diaolong zhu (Annotated Edition of "The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons")*, 2 vols. (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1978), 46–47.

3. The English translation of the first two poems is mine. The translation of "Lisao" is from David Hawkes, ed. and trans., *The Songs of the South: An Anthology of Ancient Chinese Poems by Qu Yuan and Other Poets* (New York: Penguin, 1985), 67–95, with minor changes. For the translation, I have also consulted Burton Watson, trans. and ed., *The Columbia Book of Chinese Poetry: From Early Times to the Thirteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 54–66, and Stephen Owen, trans. and ed., *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911* (New York: Norton, 1996), 162–175. To facilitate reading and discussion, I have broken "Lisao" into sections. The romanizations of Chinese characters in this poem were added by the editor.

4. Ban Gu, *Han shu (History of the Han Dynasty)* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 28b.1666, quoted and translated in Hawkes, *Songs of the South*, 18.

5. Fig trees grow on land, lotuses in water, and thus the speaker is saying that her search for her lord is bound to be fruitless.

6. Most Chinese scholars agree on this. Another view of these two poems is that they are about the two daughters of the ancient sage-ruler Yao, who gave them to his successor, Shun, in marriage. According to the legend, they drowned in the Xiang River when they heard that their Shun had died. Hawkes, who holds this view, states that "the words in both of these songs are sung throughout in *propria persona* by a male shaman who is pretending to be out in a boat looking for the goddess among her island haunts" (*Songs of the South*, 106).

7. David Hawkes discusses this theme in “The Quest of the Goddess,” in *Studies in Chinese Literary Genres*, ed. Cyril Birch (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 42–68.

8. Wang and Hong, *Chuci buzhu*, does not have this character but notes that it was here in another edition. It is included in other editions I consulted.

9. Wang and Hong, *Chuci buzhu*, does not have this character but notes that it was here in another edition. It is included in other editions I consulted.

10. Compare with lines 21 and 22 in “The Lord of the Xiang River.”

11. Jiuyi Mountain is the burial place of Shun.

12. Ma Maoyuan believes that these are presents of love given to the Lord of the Xiang by the Lady of the Xiang. Citing some examples from ancient texts, he further maintains that exchanging clothes between lovers was an ancient custom (Ma Maoyuan, ed., *Chuci xuan* [Selections from the “Chuci”] [Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1998], 63).

13. Hawkes discusses the inconsistencies in the accounts of Qu Yuan in early texts (*Songs of the South*, 51–66).

14. Sima Qian, *Shiji* (Records of the Grand Scribe) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1963), 84.2481–2491.

15. Gao Yang, also known as Zhuan Xu, was a legendary lord (*di*). Qu Yuan’s ancestors were said to be his descendants.

16. *Geng-yin* is the twenty-seventh day of the month in the ancient Chinese system of calculating days.

17. According to the *Shiji*, Qu Yuan’s name (*ming*) was Ping and his title (*zi*) was Yuan. “True Exemplar” and “Divine Balance” are said to be illustrations of his real name and title.

18. Hawkes, *Songs of the South*, 27.

19. Wang and Hong, *Chuci buzhu*, 2–3.

20. Commentators disagree on who these “three kings of old” were. Most adopt Wang Yi’s view, that they refer to King Yu, founder of the Xia dynasty; King Tang, founder of the Shang dynasty; and King Wen of the Zhou dynasty.

21. Yao and Shun were sage-rulers in antiquity.

22. Jie and Zhou were the infamous last rulers of the Xia and Shang dynasties, respectively.

23. The identity of the “woman,” which is my rendering of the Chinese word *nüxu* (Hawkes translates it as “My Nü Xu”), has been debated for a long time. Wang Yi has claimed, although without offering any evidence, that she was Qu Yuan’s sister. I follow the opinion advocated by You Guoen and others: You regards *nüxu* as a “common reference to woman” (*Lisao zuanyi* [Collected Commentaries of “Lisao”] [Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980], 188).

24. Gun was the father of King Yu, founder of the Xia dynasty. According to ancient legends, Shun entrusted Gun with the task of controlling the flood that was devastating China at that time. He failed, and as a punishment, he was put to death by Shun. Most commentators regard this story to be the source of the reference here. Ma Maoyuan, however, has pointed out another source, which seems more relevant. In chapter 13 of the *Han Feizi*, it is noted that when “Yao wanted to abdicate to Shun, Gun advised against it, saying, ‘Inauspicious indeed! Who would give up the world to a commoner?’ Yao ignored Gun’s words and put him to death in the plains around Yu Mountain” (*Chuci xuan*, 18).

25. Cangwu is Shun’s burial place. The “Hanging Garden” is said to be on Mount Kunlun, in the far west.

26. Xi He is the charioteer of the sun.

27. Yan-zi Mountain is where the sun sets in the far west.

28. The Pool of Heaven is a constellation in the western sky. The sun is said to bathe there before setting.

29. Fu-sang is a tree that grows in the far east. The sun shines through it when it first rises in the morning.

30. Ruo is a tree that grows in the far west on Mount Kunlun.

31. Wang Shu is the charioteer of the moon.

32. Fei Lian is the god of the wind.
33. “Bird of Heaven” is Hawkes’s rendering of *luan*, a supernatural bird that looks like a rooster with brilliant colors.
34. White Water is said to flow from Kunlun Mountain, one of whose peaks is Lang-feng.
35. The House of Spring is the residence of the Green God in the east.
36. Feng Long is the master of the clouds; another view holds that he is also the master of thunder.
37. Fu Fei is the goddess of the Luo River. It is said that she was the daughter of Fu Xi, a leader of an ancient tribe. She drowned in the Luo River and later became its guardian.
38. Wang Yi has claimed, although without providing support, that Jianxiu was a minister of Fu Xi, Fu Fei’s father.
39. Qiong-shi was the home of Lord Yi, a master of archery. In “Heavenly Questions,” another work attributed to Qu Yuan, there is a legend about Lord Yi shooting the god of the Yellow River and abducting the Luo goddess to be his wife. Some commentators, among them Hawkes, regard the reference to Qiong-shi Mountain and the Wei-pan Stream as a suggestion that Fu Fei led a wanton lifestyle (*Songs of the South*, 91).
40. You, *Lisao zuanyi*, 290, 294.
41. Ling Fen was a master of divination.
42. The Ford of Heaven is a constellation in the eastern sky.
43. According to Chinese mythology, the God of the West, also known as Shao Hao, presides over the western regions.
44. According to ancient myths, Bu-zhou Mountain is northwest of Mount Kunlun.
45. The Nine Songs are the music of heaven. According to legend, Shao music was the music of the sage-ruler Shun.
46. *Luan* (literally, disorderly) is a musical term designating the final section of a song. It is so called because it sounded disorderly when all the instruments were played together at the end of a piece.
47. Hawkes, *Songs of the South*, 68–78.

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## **PART 2**

# **The Han Dynasty**

## ***Fu* Poetry**

### An Ancient-Style Rhapsody (*Gufu*)

“Shanglin *fu*” (*Fu* on the Imperial Park) is an example of the most important poetic form of the Han dynasty (206 B.C.E.–220 C.E.), the ***fu***. The *fu* has no exact counterpart in Western literature. The term has been variously translated as “rhapsody,” “rhyme-prose,” “exposition,” and “poetic description.” One of the important formative influences on the Han *fu* is the literary tradition of Chu, especially the poems attributed to **Qu Yuan**, which in Han times were actually classified as *fu*. The Han *fu* inherited from the Chu poems the *sao*-style prosody ([chap. 2](#)), ornate diction, and the themes of the imaginary journey as an escape from the troubles of the world and the complaint of the scholar-official who feels unappreciated by his contemporaries.

Although the *fu* has its origins in pre-Han literature, the mature form of the *fu* did not emerge until the Former Han dynasty (206 B.C.E.–8 C.E.), when poets, especially at the Han imperial court, began to compose long, difficult poems that became the standard against which most *fu* ultimately are measured. This type of *fu*, which later anthologists classified as the *gufu* (ancient-style *fu*), has the following features: an ornate style, lines of unequal length, a mixture of rhymed and unrhymed passages, parallelism and antithesis, elaborate description, hyperbole, repetition of synonyms, extensive cataloging, difficult language, a tendency toward a complete portrayal of a subject, and often a moral conclusion.

Other types of *fu* developed during the Han. For example, some writers began to use the *fu* as a means of personal expression. This type of *fu*, in which the poet vents his anger against a “hostile” ruler and court, is called the frustration *fu*. One common theme is the topos of time’s fate, in

which the poet complains that he has been born in the wrong time for the acceptance of his ideas. Another type of *fu* that became increasingly common by the Later Han period (25–220) is the **yongwu** (poem on things). *Yongwu* poems are relatively short compositions on birds, other animals, plants, stones, household articles, buildings, musical instruments—even insects.

By the end of the Later Han, writers began to write shorter, more “lyrical” pieces, many of which are nearly indistinguishable from lyric *shi* compositions. A good example is “Deng lou fu” (*Fu* on Climbing the Tower), by **Wang Can** (177–217). Wang Can wrote this poem after climbing a wall tower at the southeastern corner of the city of Maicheng, which was located at the confluence of the Zhang and Ju rivers, about thirty miles northwest of modern Jiangling. He begins the *fu* by describing what he sees from the tower. He sees the Zhang River, with its small tributary that connects with the twisting Ju River and its long sandbars. In back of him he sees hills and a long plain, and in front he gazes on wet marshlands. The area also is the site of grave mounds, and the land is rich with flowers, fruit, and millets. However, as beautiful as the scene is, the poet is not happy in this place, and he expresses the regret that he is unable to return to his home in the north.

During the Southern and Northern Dynasties period, the *fu* continued to be a favored form of poetic writing. In this period, the form was strongly influenced by the aesthetic of the parallel couplet, and many of the *fu* compositions consist almost entirely of lines that are perfectly matched grammatically and semantically. This form, known as the *pianfu* (parallel-style *fu*), flourished in the late Southern Dynasties. In the Tang, an even more intricately crafted form was the *lüfu* (regulated *fu*), which was the required form for the civil service examinations.

The most distinguished *fu* writer of the Han was **Sima Xiangru** (179–117 B.C.E.). He was a native of Chengdu in the Shu commandery (modern Chengdu, Sichuan). During the 140s B.C.E., he served for several years at the imperial court and for a somewhat longer period at the court of Liu Wu (d. 144 B.C.E.), prince of Liang. In 144 B.C.E., Sima Xiangru returned to Shu, where he married Zhuo Wenjun, the daughter of a wealthy iron manufacturer. In 137 B.C.E., he took up a post at the court of Emperor Wu (**Han Wudi** [r. 140–87 B.C.E.]), where he served in various capacities until 119 B.C.E., when he retired to the imperial mausoleum town of Maoling. While in imperial service, one of Sima Xiangru’s main duties was to compose *fu* for the entertainment of the members of the court. His most



famous piece is “*Fu* on the Imperial Park.” Although the most common title for this *fu* is “*Fu* on the Imperial Park,” the original title may have been “Tianzi you lie fu” (*Fu* on the Excursions and Hunts of the Son of Heaven). The work actually consists of two parts. The first part, which is eliminated from the translation given here, consists of most of “Zixu fu” (*Fu* of Sir Vacuous). The second section, “*Fu* on the Imperial Park,” is the sequel that Sima Xiangru composed for Emperor Wu.

Sima Xiangru frames the *fu* in a form that is a common feature of the *fu* genre, a debate between three men, each with an imaginary name. First there is Sir Vacuous, who represents Chu as an emissary to Qi. He has attended a hunt hosted by the king of Qi. Representing Qi is a man named Master Improbable. In the “*Fu* of Sir Vacuous,” each of them presents a lavish description of the hunting parks in their home states. The third protagonist is Lord No-such, who in “*Fu* on the Imperial Park” describes the wonders of Shanglin Park. This debate feature has its roots in the rhetorical tradition of the Warring States period, much of which consists of debates between men with opposing points of view. Each of the three imaginary gentlemen is the equivalent of a traveling persuader who applies his rhetorical skill on behalf of his ruler.

### C3.1

*Fu* on the Imperial Park

上林賦

(shànglín fù)

Lord No-such grinned and laughed, saying, “Chu has lost its case, but neither has Qi gained anything to its credit. Having the vassal lords present tribute is not for the articles and presents themselves, but is a means for them to report on the administration of their offices. Setting up boundaries and drawing borders are not for protection or defense, but are a means of curbing excess.

亡是公听然而笑曰：楚則失矣，而齊亦未爲得也。夫使諸侯納貢者，非爲財幣，所以述職也；封疆畫界者，非爲守禦，所以禁淫也。

10	"Now Qi Has been placed as the eastern defensive barrier, <sup>1</sup> Yet externally it secretly consorts with Sushen, <sup>3</sup> Abandons its own territory, goes beyond its borders, Crosses the sea to hunt. <sup>4</sup>	今齊 列爲東藩 而外私肅慎 捐國逾限 越海而田	(jīn qí) (liè wéi dōng fān) <sup>2</sup> (ér wài sī sù shèn) (juān guó yú xiàn) (yuè hǎi ér tián)
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"In terms of its vassal duty, such things certainly should not be allowed. Moreover, in your speeches both of you gentlemen do not strive to elucidate the duties of ruler and subject or to correct the ritual behavior of the vassal lords. You merely devote yourselves to competing over the pleasures of excursions and games, the size of parks and preserves, wishing to overwhelm each other with wasteful ostentation and surpass one another in wild excesses. These things cannot serve to spread fame or enhance a reputation, but are enough to defame your rulers and do injury to yourselves. Furthermore, how are the affairs of Qi and Chu worth mentioning? Have you not seen the beauty of the large? Have you not heard of the Imperial Park of the Son of Heaven?

其於義固未可也。且二君之論，不務明君臣之義，正諸侯之禮，徒事爭於遊戲之樂，苑囿之大，欲以奢侈相勝，荒淫相越，此不可以揚名發譽，而適足以貶君自損也。且夫齊楚之事又烏足道乎？君未睹夫巨麗也，獨不聞天子之上林乎？

11	"To its left is Cangwu, <sup>5</sup> To its right is Western Limits; <sup>6</sup>	左蒼梧 右西極	(zuǒ cāng wú) (yòu xī jí)
30	The Cinnabar River traverses its south, <sup>7</sup> The Purple Gulf intersects its north. <sup>8</sup> Here begin and end the Ba and Chan, Here exit and enter the Jing and Wei. The Feng, Hao, Lao, and Jue <sup>9</sup>	丹水更其南 紫淵徑其北 終始灞澹 出入涇渭 酈鎬潦潏	(dān shuǐ gēng qí nán) (zǐ yuān jìng qí běi) (zhōng shǐ bà chǎn) (chū rù jìng wèi) (lè hào liǎo jué)
35	Twisting and twining, sinuously snaking Crisscross within it. Vast and wide, the eight streams separately flow, Back to back, each in a different manner. East, west, south, and north,	紆餘委蛇 經營乎其內 蕩蕩乎八川分流 相背而異態 東西南北	(yū yú wēi yí) (jīng yíng hū qí nèi) (dàng dàng hū bā chuān fēn liú) (xiāng bèi ér yì tài) (dōng xī nán běi)
40	They gallop and dash hither and thither. They emerge from gaps in steep hills, Run along the banks of holms and isles,	馳騫往來 出乎椒丘之闕 行乎洲淤之浦	(chí wù wǎng lái) (chū hū jiāo qiū zhī quē) (xíng hū zhōu yū zhī pǔ)

	Pass through the middle of cinnamon groves, Cross into broad and boundless wastes.	經乎桂林之中 過乎泱漭之壑	(jīng hū guì lín zhī (guò hū yāng mǎng
45	Swiftly, amply flowing, They descend along the slopes, Enter mouths of narrow gorges, Collide with giant boulders, Smash against winding shores, Frothing with violent anger.	汨乎混流 順阿而下 赴隘陝之口 觸穹石 激堆埼 沸乎暴怒	(yù hū hùn liú) (shùn ē ér xià) (fù ài xiá zhī kǒu) (chù qióng shí) (jī duī qí) (fèi hū bào nù)
50	Soaring and leaping, surging and swelling, Spurting and spouting, rushing and racing, Pressing and pushing, clashing and colliding, Flowing uncontrolled, bending back,	洶湧澎湃 湍弗宓汨 偁側泌瀦 橫流逆折	(xiōng yǒng péng pà (bì fēi mì yù) (bī cè bì jié) (héng liú nì zhé)
55	Wheeling and rearing, beating and battering, Swelling and surging, troublous and turbulent. Loftily arching, billowing like clouds, Sinuously snaking, curling and coiling, Outracing their own waves, rushing to the chasms,	轉騰激洄 滂湃沆溉 穹隆雲橈 宛潭膠盪 逾波趨汜 蒞蒞下瀨	(zhuǎn téng piē liè) (páng pì hàng gài) (qióng lóng yún náo) (wǎn shàn jiāo lì) (yú bō qū fà) (lì lì xià lài)
60	Lap, lap, they descend to the shoals. Striking the bluffs, hurtling against the dikes, Racing and swelling, spraying and spuming. Nearing the sandbars, they pour into gullies, Plashing and splashing as they tumble downward.	批巖衝擁 奔揚滯沛 臨坻注壑 澹滂貫壁	(pī yán chōng yōng) (bēn yáng zhì pèi) (lín chí zhù hè) (chán zhuó yún zhū)
65	Deep, deep, full, full, Rumbling and roaring, bellowing and blustering, Bubbling and boiling, gushing and gurgling, Foaming and frothing like a seething cauldron, Speeding waves, flinging spray,	沈沈隱隱 砰磅訇礚 漓漓淅淅 淢淢鼎沸 馳波跳沫	(chén chén yǐn yǐn) (pēng pāng hōng kà) (jué jué gǔ gǔ) (chì jí dǐng fèi) (chí bō tiào mò)
70	They swiftly swirl, furious and fast. Far and wide, distantly heading homeward, Still and silent, without a sound, Gently, they make their long return. And then Broad and boundless, deep and wide,	汨遡漂疾 悠遠長懷 寂漻無聲 肆乎永歸 然後 灩澦潢漾	(yù xī piāo jí) (yōu yuǎn cháng hu) (jì liáo wú shēng) (sì hū yǒng guī) (rán hòu) (hào yāo huáng yàng)
75	Calmly coursing, slowly turning, Brightly gleaming and glistening, Eastward they pour into great lakes, Spill and overflow into reservoirs and ponds. Thereupon,	安翔徐回 潏乎漓漓 東注太湖 衍溢陂池 於是	(ān xiáng xú huí) (hè hū hào hào) (dōng zhù tài hú) (yǎn yì bēi chí) (yú shì)
80	Scaly dragons and scarlet wiverns, Beaked sturgeons, crayfish, Striped fish, bighead carp, eels, yellow catfish, Fish-ox, flounders, Raising their dorsal fins, wiggling their tails,	蛟龍赤螭 鰐鰕鰓離 鰐鰕鰓離 禺禺魼魴 捷鯨掉尾	(jiāo lóng chì chí) (gèng mèng jiàn lí) (yóng yóng qiàn tuō) (yóng yóng xú nà) (qián qí diào wěi)
85	Shaking their scales, flapping their fins,	振鱗奮翼	(zhèn lín fèn yì)

	Dwell submerged in the deep recesses.	潛處乎深巖	(qián chù hū shēn yán)
	Fish and turtles noisily sound forth;	魚鼈譁聲	(yú biē huān shēng)
	Myriad creatures throng in great numbers.	萬物眾夥	(wàn wù zhòng huǒ)
	Luminous moons and pearlets	明月珠子	(míng yuè zhū zǐ)
90	Gleam and glow on the riverbanks.	的皪江靡	(dì lì jiāng mí)
	Shu stone, yellow quartz,	蜀石黃礪	(shǔ shí huáng ruǎn)
	Rock crystal heaped high:	水玉磊砢	(shuǐ yù lěi kě)
	Spangling and sparkling, glittering and glistening,	磷磷爛爛	(lín lín làn làn)
	Their colors and hues brightly shining,	采色滢汗	(cǎi sè hào hàn)
95	Are thickly gathered within them.	叢積乎其中	(yè jī hū qí zhōng)
	Swan geese, kingfishers, swans, bustards,	鴻鵠鵠鵠	(hóng sù hú bǎo)
	Wild geese, white herons,	鴛鴦屬玉	(yuān é zhǔ yù)
	Night herons, revolving eyes,	交精旋目	(jiāo jīng xuán mù)
	Hornbills, dike ducks,	煩驚庸渠	(fán wù yōng qú)
100	Needle beaks, and cormorants,	箴疵鵠盧	(zhēn cǐ xiāo lú)
	Swim in flocks on the surface,	羣浮乎其	(qún fú hū qí shàng)
	Freely floating, wandering at will,	汎淫汎濫	(fàn yín fàn làn)
	Tossed and tumbled with the wind,	風澹淡	(fēng dàn dàn)
	Bobbing and rocking with the waves,	與波搖蕩	(yǔ bō yáo dàng)
105	Resting and roosting on the river holms,	奄薄水隈	(yān bó shuǐ zhǐ)
	Nibbling at water grass and horsetail,	啜喋蓴藻	(shà zhà jīng zǎo)
	Chewing caltrop and lotus.	咀嚼菱藕	(jǔ jué líng ǒu)

### III

	"And then the lofty mountains spire on high:	於是乎崇山矗矗	(yú shì hū chóng shān chù chù)
	Arching aloft, tall and towering,	龍嵒崔巍	(lóng sǒng cuī wēi)
110	Densely forested with giant trees,	深林巨木	(shēn lín jù mù)
	Steeply scarped, jaggedly jutting.	嵒巖參差	(chán yán cēn cī)
	Jiuzong rises sheer and sharp, <sup>10</sup>	九峻巖嶭	(jiǔ zōng zá è)
	Southern Mountains soar solemn and stately, <sup>11</sup>	南山峨峨	(nán shān é é)
	Their cliffs and ledges, like tottering cauldrons,	巖池顛鎬	(yán yǐ yǎn qí)
115	Stand precipitously piled, jagged and steep	摧峯崛崎	(cuī wēi jué qí)
	Waters collect in streams, converge in gullies,	振溪通谷	(zhèn xī tōng gǔ)
	Which twist and twine into cloughs and channels.	蹇產溝瀆	(jiǎn chǎn gōu dú)
	Valley mouths widely gape and yawn,	豁呀豁問	(hū yā huò xiǎ)
	Mounds rise from the waters, each a separate isle.	阜陵別島	(fù líng bié dǎo)
120	The hills, rugged and ragged,	嵒塊峩峩	(wēi kuí tiáo huì)
	Hillocky and hummocky, rolling and rearing,	丘虛堀礧	(qiū xū jué lěi)
	Cragged and crannied,	隱嶙鬱鬱	(yǐn lín yù lěi)
	Rise and fall, wind and weave.	登降施靡	(dēng jiàng yī mí)
	Where the land slopes and slants, gradually		
	levels out,	陂池獐豸	(pí chí bǐ zhì)
125	The waters stream forth in a flooding flow,	允溶淫潏	(yǔn róng yín yù)
	Scattering and spreading over the level plain,	散渙夷陸	(sǎn huàn yí lù)

	For a thousand leagues of flat marshland, There is nothing that has not been tamped smooth.	亭皋千里	(tíng gāo qiān lǐ)
	The ground is covered with green patchouli,	靡不被築	(mí bú bèi zhù)
	Blanketed with lovage shoots,	揜以綠蕙	(yǎn yǐ lǜ huì)
130	Scattered with lovage leaves,	被以江離	(bèi yǐ jiāng lí)
	Strewn with peonies,	糝以靡蕪	(róu yǐ mí wú)
	Spreading knot-thread,	雜以留夷	(zá yǐ liú yí)
	Clustered green galingale,	布結縷	(bù jié lǚ)
	Cart-halt, asarum, bugleweed,	攢戾莎	(cuán lì suō)
135	Sichuan lovage, blackberry lily,	揭車衡蘭	(jiē chē héng lán)
	Purple ginger, mioga ginger,	橐本射干	(hào běn yè gān)
	Winter cherry, ground-cherry, polliia, sweet flag,	茈薑蘘荷	(zī jiāng ráng hé)
	Malabar spinach, virgin's bower,	葳持若蓀	(zhēn chí ruò sūn)
140	Water bamboo, burreed tuber, and green sedge,	鮮支黃礫	(xiān zhī huáng lì)
	Spread and sprawl over the wide marsh,	蔣芋青蘋	(jiǎng zhù qīng fán)
	Range and ramble over the great plain,	布濩閭澤	(bù huò lóng zé)
	Tightly tangled, broadly stretching.	延曼太原	(yán màn tài yuán)
	Bent and blown by the wind,	離靡廣衍	(lí mí guǎng yǎn)
145	They emit fragrance, waft pungency,	應風披靡	(yīng fēng pī mí)
	Rich and redolent, sweetly-scented,	吐芳揚烈	(tǔ fāng yáng liè)
	And myriad perfumes issue forth,	郁郁菲菲	(yù yù fēi fēi)
	Spread and scatter, permeating everything,	眾香發越	(zhòng xiāng fā yuè)
	Thick and heavy, strong and sharp.	肸蠁布寫	(xì xiǎng bù xiě)
		晻薹唼葍	(yǎn ài bí bó)

“And then, gazing round, broadly viewing, one sees such plenteous profusion, such a vast vista, he becomes dizzy and dazed, confounded and confused.

於是乎周覽汎觀，縝紛軋芴，芒芒怳忽。

150	"Look at it, and it has no beginning; Examine it, and it has no end. The sun rises from its eastern pond, Sets at its western dike. To the south	視之無端 察之無涯 日出東沼 入庠西陂 其南則	(shì zhī wú duān) (chá zhī wú yá) (rì chū dōng zhǎo) (rù hū xī bēi) (qí nán zé)
155	In deepest winter there are germination and growth, Bubbling waters, and surging waves. Its animals are: The zebu, hairy yak, tapir, grunting ox, Plunging bull, sambar, elaphure,	隆冬生長 涌水躍波 其獸則 庸旄貘犛 沈牛麀麋	(lóng dōng shēng zhǎng) (yǒng shuǐ yuè bō) (qí shòu zé) (yōng máo mò lí) (chén niú zhū mí)
160	Redhead, roundhoof, Extreme extraordinaire, elephant, and rhinoceros. To the north In full summer it is enveloped in freezing cold that cleaves the ground;	赤首圓蹄 窮奇象犀 其北則 盛夏含凍裂地	(chì shǒu yuán tí) (qióng qí xiàng xī) (qí běi zé) (shèng xià hán dòng liè dì)

	One lifts his skirt to cross the iced-over streams. Its animals are: Unicorn, horn-snout,	涉冰揭河 其獸則 麒麟角端	(shè bīng jiē hé) (qí shòu zé) (qí lín juéduān)
165	Tarpan, camel, Chigetai, kulan, Hinny, ass, and mule.	駒駝橐駝 蛩蛩驪騮 駃騠騊駼	(táo tú tuó tuó) (qióng qióng diān xī) (jué tí tóu tuó)
IV			
	"And then Detached palaces, separate lodges, Stretch over mountains, straddle valleys:	於是乎 離宮別館 彌山跨谷	(yú shì hū) (lí gōng bié guǎn) (mí shān kuà gǔ)
170	Tall corridors pour out in four directions, With double decks and twisting passageways, Fitted with ornate rafters and jade finials, Carriage roads are laced and linked together. To course through the covered walkways,	高廊四注 重坐曲閣 華榱壁璫 輦道繡屬 步闌周流	(gāo láng sì zhù) (chóng zuò qǔ gé) (huá cuī bì dāng) (niǎn dào lí zhǔ) (bù yán zhōu liú)
175	Long is the route, and midway one must halt for the night. On leveled peaks they built the halls, With tiered terraces rising story upon story, And cavernous rooms in the crags and crannies. Downward through deep darkness nothing can be seen,	長途中宿 夷峻築堂 衆臺增成 巖突洞房	(cháng tú zhōng sù) (yí zǒng zhù táng) (lǚ tái zēng chéng) (yán tū dòng fáng)
180	Upward, one may clutch rafters to touch the sky. Shooting stars pass through doors and wickets; Arching rainbows stretch over the rails and porches. A green dragon curls and coils in the eastern chamber, An elephant carriage twists and turns through the western repose,	類杳眇而無見 仰攀椽而捫天 奔星更於閭闔  宛虹拖於楯軒  青龍蜿蜒於東箱	(fǔ yǎo miǎo ér wú jiàn) (yǎng pān lǎo ér mén tiān) (bēn xīng gēng yú guī tà)  (wǎn hóng tuō yú shǔn xuān)  (qīng lóng yǎo liú yú dōng xiāng)
185	Hordes of immortals rest in the leisure lodges, Wo Quan and his kind sun themselves in the southern eaves, <sup>12</sup> Sweetwater springs bubble among the cool rooms, Spring-fed streams pass through the central courtyard. Giant boulders, lining the shores,	象輿婉憚於西清 靈囿燕於閭館  偃佺之倫暴於南榮 醴泉涌於清室  通川過於中庭 磐石振崖	(xiàng yú wǎn shàn yú xī qīng) (líng yǔ yàn yú xián guǎn)  (wò quán zhī lún pù yú nán róng) (lǐ quán yǒng yú qīng shì)  (tōng chuān guò yú zhōng tíng) (pán shí zhèn yá)
190	Like craggy cliffs sideward lean. Tall and towering, peaked and pinnacled, They seem carved and chiseled, steeply poised. Rose stone, prase, dark jade, And coral grow in clusters.	嵌巖倚傾 嵯峨磔磔 刻削崢嶸 玫瑰碧琳 珊瑚叢生	(qīn yán yǐ qīng) (cuō é jié yè) (kè xuē zhēng róng) (méi guī bì lín) (shān hú cóng shēng)
195	Agate gems and large carnelians	珉玉旁唐	(mín yù páng táng)





	Are striped and streaked like patterned fish scales.	玢幽文磷	(bīn bīn wén lín)
	Red jade, mottled and marbled,	赤瑕駁瑱	(chì xiá bó luò)
	Are mixed and mingled among them.	雜函其間	(zá chā qí jiān)
	Morning iridescence, rounded and pointed jades,	電采琬琰	(zhào cǎi wǎn yǎn)
200	Mr. He's jade come there.	和氏出焉	(hé shì chū yān)
	And then	於是乎	(yú shì hū)
	Black kumquats that ripen in summer,	盧橘夏孰	(lú jú xià shú)
	Yellow mandarins, coolie oranges, pomelos,	黃甘橙棣	(huáng gān chéng dòu)
	Loquats, wild jujubes, persimmons,	枇杷燃柿	(pí pá rán shì)
	Wild pears, apples, magnolias,	亭柰厚朴	(tíng nài hòu pǔ)
205	Date palms, box myrtles,	栲囊楊梅	(yǐng zǎo yáng méi)
	Cherries, grapes,	櫻桃蒲陶	(yīng táo pú táo)
	Dark poplars, dwarf cherries,	隱夫莫楸	(yǐn fū mò qiū)
	Plums and litchees	苔遲離支	(tāi chí lí zhī)
	Are spread among the rear palaces,	羅乎後宮	(luó hū hòu gōng)
210	Form rows in the northern orchards,	列乎北園	(liè hū běi yuán)
	Stretch over hills and mounds,	馳丘陵	(chí qiū líng)
	Descend to the level plain.	下平原	(xià píng yuán)
	They wave their emerald leaves,	揚翠葉	(yáng cuì yè)
	Sway their purple stalks,	抗紫莖	(kàng zǐ jīng)
215	Burst with red blossoms,	發紅華	(fā hóng huá)
	Hang with vermilion blooms.	垂朱榮	(chuí zhū róng)
	Bright and brilliant, grand and glorious,	煌煌彪彪	(huáng huáng hū hū)
	They splendidly sparkle in the vast fields.	照耀鉅野	(zhào yào jù yě)
	Apples, oaks,	沙棠櫟櫨	(shā táng lì zhū)
220	White birch, liquidambars, gingkos, sumacs,	華楓枰櫨	(huá fēng píng lú)
	Pomegranates, coconuts,	留落胥邪	(liú luò xū yé)
	Betel palms, windmill palms,	仁頻并間	(rén pín bìng jiān)
	Sandalwoods, magnolias,	欒檀木蘭	(chán tán mù lán)
	Camphors, and wax trees:	豫章女貞	(yù zhāng nǚ zhēn)
225	Grow a thousand yards tall,	長千仞	(cháng qiān rèn)
	So wide only joined hands can span them.	大連抱	(dà lián bào)
	Their blossoms and branches unfolding straight,	夸條直暢	(kuā tiáo zhí chàng)
	Their fruits and leaves lush and luxuriant.	實葉葳蕤	(shí yè wēi ruí)
	The trees stand in thickets, lean in clusters,	攢立叢倚	(cuán lì cóng yǐ)
230	Bent and bowed, clinging together, then		
	cleaving apart,	連卷攏儼	(lián juǎn lǐ guǎn)
	Tangled and twined, twisted and gnarled,	崔錯發歛	(cuī cuò bó wěi)
	Locked as in combat, in layered limbs.	坑衡間矜	(kēng héng jiān jīn)
	Drooping branches spread and splay,	垂條扶疏	(chuí tiáo fú shū)
	Falling petals fly and flutter.	落英幡纒	(luò yīng fān shǐ)
235	Lush and luxuriant, closely clustered,	紛溶蓊鬱	(fēn róng xiāo yù)
	They swing and sway with the wind,	猗猗從風	(yī ní cóng fēng)
	Which sighs and sighs, whistles and whiffles,	薊蒨蒨歛	(jiù lì huì xǐ)

	Like the sounds of bells and chimes, Or the music of pipes and flutes.	蓋象金石之聲 管籥之音	(gài xiàng jīn shí zhī shēng) (guǎn yuè zhī yīn)
240	Tall and short, high and low, The trees surround the rear palaces. Manifoldly layered, piled one upon another, They blanket the mountains, hem the valleys, Follow the slopes, descend into the depressions.	柴池茈廌 旋還乎後宮 雜襲紖輯 被山緣谷 循阪下隴	(cāi chí cǐ zhì) (xuán huán hū hòu gōng) (zá xí lǐ jí) (bèi shān yuán gǔ) (xún bǎn xià xí)
245	Look at them, and there is no beginning; Examine them and there is no end. And then Black apes and white she-apes, Kahaus, hoolocks, flying squirrels, Dusky gibbons, monkeys,	視之無端 究之亡窮 於是乎 玄猿素雌 雌獼飛蠅 蛭蝟獼猴	(shì zhī wú duān) (jiū zhī wú qióng) (yú shì hū) (xuán yuán sù cí) (wèi jué fēi lěi) (zhì tiáo jué náo)
250	Macaques, weasels, and siamangs Roost and repose among the trees. With long howls and sad shrieks, Gracefully gliding, they cross back and forth, Bending and bowing on the branches and boughs,	獼胡穀蜺 棲息乎其間 長嘯哀鳴 翩幡互經	(chán hú hù guī) (qī xī hū qí jiān) (cháng xiào āi míng) (piān pān hù jīng)
255	Hunched and hunkered on the treetops. They overleap unbridged streams, Spring to the top of sundry thickets. Clutching hanging twigs, Throwing themselves through open spaces.	天矯枝格 偃蹇杪顛 踰絕梁 騰殊榛 捷垂條	(yāo jiǎo zhī gé) (yǎn jiǎn miǎo diān) (yú jué liáng) (téng shū zhēn) (jié chuí tiáo)
260	Sparsely scattered, helter-skelter, The troupe dissolves and disperses, receding into the distance.	掉希間 牢落陸離 爛漫遠遷	(diào xī jiān) (láo luò lù lí) (làn màn yuǎn qiān)

“Places of this sort number in the hundreds and thousands. The emperor sports and plays hither and thither, and in whatever palace he spends the night or lodge where he rests, his kitchen need not be transported, his harem need not be moved, and his official staff is ready and waiting.

若此者數百千處。娛游往來，宮宿館舍，庖廚不徙，後宮不移，百官備具。

## V

“And then, as the year turns its back on autumn and edges into winter, the Son of Heaven stages the barricade hunt.

於是乎背秋涉冬，天子校獵。

270	<p>“He mounts a chariot of carved ivory,          Drawn by six jade-encrusted dragon-steeds.          Waving rainbow banners,          Trailing cloud pennants,          They march with the hide-covered wagon at the              fore,</p>	<p>乘鏤象          六玉虬          拖蜺旌          靡雲旗</p>	<p>(chéng lǚ xiàng)          (liù yù qiú)          (tuō ní jīng)          (mí yún qí)</p>
275	<p>The guiding and excursion chariots in the rear.          Elder Sun holds the reins,</p>	<p>前皮軒          後道游          孫叔奉轡</p>	<p>(qián pí xuān)          (hòu dào yóu)          (sūn shū fèng pèi)</p>

	Sir Wei accompanies the chariot. Guards and attendants marching on the flank, Are chosen from the four brigades.	衛公參乘 扈從橫行 出乎四校之中	(wèi gōng cān shèng) (hù cóng héng xíng) (chū hū sì jiào zhī zhōng)
280	To the drumbeats from the rigid ranks of the cortege, They unleash the hunters. The Yangtze and Yellow River are the corral, Mount Tai is the lookout tower. Chariots and riders thunderously set forth,	鼓嚴簿 縱獵者 江河為陜 泰山為櫓 車騎雷起	(gǔ yán bó) (zòng liè zhě) (jiāng hé wéi qù) (tài shān wéi lǔ) (jū jì léi qǐ)
285	Shake the heavens, move the earth, Front and rear, hither and thither, Scattered and dispersed, in separate pursuit; Steadily streaming, continuously coursing, They skirt along the mounds, follow the marshes,	殷天動地 先後陸離 離散別追 淫淫裔裔 緣陵流澤	(yīn tiān dòng dì) (xiān hòu lù lí) (lí sǎn bié zhuī) (yín yín yì yì) (yuán líng liú zé)
290	Spreading like clouds, showering like rain. They capture alive leopards and panthers, Pummel dholes and wolves, Hand-capture black and brown bears, Kick at wild goats.	雲布雨施 生貔豹 搏豺狼 手熊羆 足壘羊	(yún bù yǔ shī) (shēng pí bào) (bó chái láng) (shǒu xióng pí) (zú yě yáng)
295	Capped in pheasant-tail hats, Clad in white tiger skin pants, Garbed in striped pelts, Astride wild horses: They scale steeps of three-tiered peaks,	蒙鶻蘇 綺白虎 被斑文 跨壘馬 陵三峻之危	(méng hé sū) (kù bái hǔ) (bèi bān wén) (kuà yě mǎ) (líng sān zōng zhī wēi)
300	Descend slopes of rocky ridges, Cut across defiles, dash into scarps, Traverse gullies, ford rivers. They maul the flying dragon-bird, Paw the sagacious stag,	下磧歷之坻 徑峻赴險 越壑厲水 推蜚廉 弄解廌	(xià qì lì zhī dī) (jìng jùn fù xiǎn) (yuè huò lì shuǐ) (tuī fēi lián) (nòng xiè zhì)
305	Wrestle a yeti, Spear a fierce tapir, Rope the graceful galloper, Shoot the giant boar. Arrows do not wantonly injure,	格蝦蚶 鏃猛氏 罽婁裘 射封豕 箭不苟害	(gé xiā gé) (jǐng měng shì) (juàn yǎo niǎo) (shè fēng shǐ) (jiàn bù gǒu hài)
310	They sever the neck, split the brain. Bows are not shot in vain, At the bowstring's twang down a beast falls. And then the emperor Slackens the pace to wander about, Roam and ramble, going to and fro,	解脰陷腦 弓不虛發 應聲而倒 於是乘輿 弭節徘徊	(jiě dòu xiàn nǎo) (gōng bù xū fā) (yīng shēng ér dǎo) (yú shì chéng yú) (mí jié pái huái)
315	To watch the movements of his regiments and companies, To observe the changing poses of the commanders.	翱翔往來 睨部曲之進退 覽將帥之變態	(áo xiáng wǎng lái) (nì bù qǔ zhī jìn tuì) (lǎn jiàng shuài zhī biàn tài)

	Then, little by little he increases the pace, And suddenly he departs for the distance, Scattering fleet-winged birds,	然後侵淫促節 條雙遠去 流離輕禽	(rán hòu qīn yín cù jié) (shū yōu yuǎn qù) (liú lí qīng qín)
320	Trampling nimble beasts, Axles crushing albino deer, Snatching up nimble hares. Overtaking scarlet lightning, Leaving its effulgent brilliance behind,	蹙履狡獸 轡白鹿 捷狡菟 軼赤電 遺光耀	(cù lǚ jiǎo shòu) (wèi bái lù) (jié jiǎo tù) (yì chì diàn) (yí guāng yào)
325	Pursuing strange beasts, He leaves the mundane realm. Bending the Fanruo bow, Drawn to the tip of the white-plumed shaft, He shoots the roving simian,	追怪物 出宇宙 彎蕃弱 滿白羽 射游梟	(zhuī guài wù) (chū yǔ zhòu) (wān fán ruò) (mǎn bái yǔ) (shè yóu xiāo)
330	Strikes the flying chimera. Carefully selecting a fleshy one, he then shoots, His first shot hits the spot he names. Just as the arrow leaves the string, The quarry is killed and falls to the ground.	櫟蜚遽 擇肉而後發 先中命處 弦矢分 蕤殪仆	(lì fēi jù) (zé ròu ér hòu fā) (xiān zhòng mìng chù) (xián shǐ fēn) (yì yì pū)
335	Then, raising the signal flag, he soars aloft, Outdistancing the startling wind, Passing through the frightful gale, Riding the empty void, Companion of the gods.	然後揚節而上浮 陵驚風 歷駭衆 乘虛亡 與神俱	(rán hòu yáng jié ér shàng fú) (líng jīng fēng) (lì hài zhòng) (chéng xū wú) (yǔ shén jù)
340	He tramples the black crane, Confounds the great fowl, Harries the peacock and simurgh, Torments the golden pheasant, Strikes the canopy bird,	蘭玄鶴 亂昆雞 適孔鸞 促駿驥 拂翳鳥	(làn xuán hè) (luàn kūn jī) (qí kǒng luán) (cù jùn jì) (fú yì niǎo)
345	Clubs the phoenix, Snatches the sea-argus, Seizes the blazing firebird.	捎鳳凰 捷鷩鷩 擒焦明	(shāo fēng huáng) (jié yuǎn chú) (yǎn jiāo míng)

“At journey’s end, road’s limit, he wheels round his carriage and turns back.

道盡塗殫，迴車而還。

350	"Slowly and leisurely he roams and rambles, And lands in the northern bounds. Rapidly he advances straight ahead, Suddenly he reverses direction. He treads Stone Gateway,	消搖乎襄羊 降集乎北紘 率乎直指 掉乎反鄉 歷石闢	(xiāo yáo hū xiāng yáng) (jiàng jí hū běi hóng) (shuài hū zhí zhǐ) (yǎo hū fǎn xiāng) (jué shí guān)
355	Crosses Great Peak Tower, Passes Jaybird Tower, Gazes at Dewy Chill, Descends to Pear Palace, <sup>13</sup> Rests in Befitting Spring. <sup>14</sup>	歷封巒 過鳩鵲 望露寒 下堂梨	(lì fēng luán) (guò zhī què) (wàng lù hán) (xià táng lí)
360	Westward he gallops to Xuanqu, Skulls the heron-prow on Oxhead Lake, Climbs Dragon Terrace, Reposes at Lithe Willows. <sup>15</sup> He observes the effort and prowess of his officers and men,	息宜春 西馳宣曲 濯鷗牛首 登龍臺 掩細柳	(xī yí chūn) (xī chí xuān qǔ) (zhuó yì niú shǒu) (dēng lóng tái) (yǎn xì liǔ)
365	Evaluates the hunters' catch. Those crushed and crumpled by foot soldiers and chariots, Those trampled and trod by infantry and cavalry, Those squashed and flattened by the multitudes, Together with those utterly and completely exhausted and fatigued,	觀士大夫之勤略 鈞獵者之所得獲 徒車之所闕轢 騎之所蹂若 人臣之所蹈藉	(guān shì dà fū zhī qín lüè) (jūn liè zhě zhī suǒ dé huò) (tú jū zhī suǒ lùn lì) (qí zhī suǒ róu ruò) (rén chén zhī suǒ dào jí)
370	In frightful panic, cowering in terror, Who died without a single wound, Heaped high, piled and pillowed, Clog the ditches, fill the gullies, Cover the plains, lie strewn over the marshes.	與其窮極倦 驚憚讐伏 不被創刃而死者 它它藉藉 填阬滿谷 掩平瀾澤	(yǔ qí qióng jí juàn) (jīng dàn zhé fú) (bú bèi chuàng rèn ér sǐ zhě) (tā tā jí jí) (tián kēng mǎn gǔ) (yǎn píng mí zé)

375	"And then Tired of excursion and sport, He holds a feast at a terrace high as vast heaven, Holds a musical performance in a capacious hall. They beat thousand-catty bells, Erect ten-thousand-catty bell-racks,	於是乎 游戲懈怠 置酒乎顙天之臺 張樂乎膠葛之宇 撞千石之鐘 立萬石之虞	(yú shì hū) (yóu xì xiè dài) (zhì jiǔ hū hào tiān zhī tái) (zhāng yuè hū jiāo gě zhī yǔ) (zhuàng qiān shí zhī zhōng) (lì wàn shí zhī yǔ)
380	Raise banners adorned with kingfisher tufts, Set in place drums of magic alligator hide. They perform dances of Taotang, Listen to songs of Getian. A thousand voices sing the lead,	建翠華之旗 樹靈鼉之鼓 奏陶唐氏之舞 聽葛天氏之歌 千人倡	(jiàn cuì huá zhī qí) (shù líng tuó zhī gǔ) (zòu táo táng shì zhī wǔ) (tīng gě tiān shì zhī gē) (qiān rén chàng)
385	Ten thousand sing the harmony. Mountains and hills from this quake and rock; Streams and valleys from this churn and billow. The music of Ba-Yu, Song, and Cai, The 'Ganzhe' of Huainan,	萬人和 山陵為之震動 川谷為之蕩波 巴俞宋蔡 淮南干遮	(wàn rén hè) (shān líng wèi zhī zhèn dòng) (chuān gǔ wèi zhī dàng bō) (bā yú sòng cài) (huái nán gān zhē)
390	Songs of Wencheng and Dian, Are presented en masse, performed en suite. Bells and drums alternately sound, Their cling-cling and rat-a-tat-tat Pierce the heart and startle the ears.	文成頗歌 族居遞奏 金鼓迭起 鏗鎗闐鞀 洞心駭耳	(wén chéng diǎn gē) (zú jū dì zòu) (jīn gǔ dié qǐ) (kēng qiāng tián tā) (dòng xīn hài ěr)

"The airs of Jing, Wu, Zheng and Wei, the music of the 'Succession,' 'Salvation,' 'Martial Dance,' and 'Mimes,' melodies of dissolute dissipation, the mixed medleys of Yan and Ying, the finale of 'Stirring Chu,' jesters and dwarfs, entertainers from Didi, everything to delight the ears and eyes, gladden the heart and spirit, all in sumptuous splendor and garish glitter pass before him.

荊、吳、鄭、衛之聲，韶、濩、武、象之樂，陰淫案衍之音，鄢、郢繽紛，激楚結風，俳優侏儒，狄鞮之倡，所以娛耳目樂心意者，麗靡爛漫於前。

405	"Beautiful ladies of dainty delicacy, Like Blue Zither and Fufei, Truly extraordinary, unmatched in the world, Beguiling and bewitching, elegant and refined, Faces powdered and painted, hair sculpted and trimmed,	靡曼美色 若夫青琴處妃之徒 絕殊離俗 妖冶閑都	(mí màn měi sè) (ruò fū qīng qín fū fēi zhī tú) (jué shū lí sú) (yāo yě xián dū)
410	Lithe and lissome, decorous and demure, Soft and supple, gracile and graceful, Winning and winsome, slender and slight, Trail the hems of their pure silk gowns, Subtly flowing and falling, perfectly tailored.	靚莊刻飾 便嬾綽約 柔橈嫋嫋 嫵媚纖弱 曳獨繭之綸褱 眇閭易以恤削	(jìng zhuāng kè shì) (pián xuān chuò yuē) (róu náo yuān yuān) (wǔ mèi xiān ruò) (yè dú jiǎn zhī yú xiè) (miǎo yān yì yǐ xù xuē)
415	As they wheel and reel, whirl and twirl, Their garments seem not of this world. Their sweet fragrance, profusely permeating, Is strong and pungent, pure and thick. Their white teeth spangle and sparkle,	便嬾嫠眉 與世殊服 芬芳瀟鬱 酷烈淑郁 皓齒粲爛	(pián shān piè xiè) (yǔ shì shū fú) (fēn fāng òu yù) (kù liè shú yù) (hào chǐ càn làn)
420	Their bright smiles gleam and glitter. Beneath long eyebrows, coiling and curling, They coyly gaze, cast sidelong glances. Their beauty is offered, the spirit consents, And one's heart rejoices to be at their side.	宜笑的矚 長眉連娟 微睇緜藐 色授魂予 心愉於側	(yí xiào dì lù) (cháng méi lián juān) (wēi dī mián miǎo) (sè shòu hún yú) (xīn yú yú cè)

## VII

"And then in the midst of drinking, during the rapture of music, the Son of Heaven becomes disconsolate, as if He had lost something. He says, 'Alas! This is too extravagant! During Our leisure moments from attending to state affairs, with nothing to do We cast away the days; following the celestial cycle, We kill and slaughter, and from time to time rest and repose here in this park. But We fear the dissolute dissipation of later generations, that once they have embarked on this course they will be unable to turn back. This is not the way to create achievements and pass down a tradition for one's heirs.'

於是酒中樂酣，天子芒然而思，似若有亡，曰：嗟乎，此大奢侈！朕以覽聽餘聞，無事棄日，順天道以殺伐，時休息於此，恐後世靡麗，遂往而不返，非所以為繼嗣創業垂統也。

"Thereupon, He ends the feast, halts the hunt, and commands His officials, saying, 'Let all land that can be reclaimed and opened up:

於是乎乃解酒罷獵，而命有司曰：地可墾辟：



440 'Be made into farmland  
In order to provide for the common folk.  
Tear down the walls, fill in the moats,

悉為農郊  
以贍氓隸  
隳牆填塹

(*xī wéi nóng jiāo*)  
(*yǐ shàn méng lì*)  
(*kuī qiáng tián qiàn*)

Allow the people of the mountains and marshes to come here.	使山澤之民得至焉 (shǐ shān zé zhī mín dé zhì yān)
Restock the pools and ponds and do not ban people from them!	實陂池而勿禁 (shí bēi chí ér wù jìn)
445 Empty the palaces and lodges and do not staff them!	虛宮館而勿仞 (xū gōng guǎn ér wù rèn)
Open the granaries and storehouses in order to give relief to the poor and destitute!	發倉廩以救貧窮 (fā cāng lǐn yǐ jiù pín qióng)
Supply what they lack,	補不足 (bǔ bù zú)
Pity widowers and widows,	恤鰥寡 (xù guān guǎ)
Console the orphaned and childless.	存孤獨 (cún gū dú)
450 Issue virtuous commands,	出德號 (chū dé hào)
Reduce punishments and penalties,	省刑罰 (shěng xíng fá)
Reform the institutions,	改制度 (gǎi zhì dù)
Alter the vestment colors,	易服色 (yì fú sè)
Change the first month and day of the year,	革正朔 (gé zhèng shuò)
455 Make a new beginning for the empire.'	與天下為始 (yǔ tiān xià wéi shǐ)

# VIII

"And then, calculating an auspicious day, He fasts and cleanses Himself:	於是歷吉日以齋戒 (yú shì lì jí rì yǐ zhāi jiè)
He dons court robes,	襲朝服 (xí cháo fú)
And mounts the chariot of the Standard Cortege.	乘法駕 (chéng fǎ jià)
With flowery banners raised on high,	建華旗 (jiàn huá qí)
460 Sounding the jade carriage bells,	鳴玉鸞 (míng yù luán)
He sports in the preserve of the Six Classics,	游于六藝之圃 (yóu yú liù yì zhī pǔ)
Gallops over the road of Humaneness and Morality,	馳騁乎仁義之塗 (chí wù hū rén yì zhī tú)
Goes sightseeing in the forest of the <i>Annals</i> ,	覽觀春秋之林 (lǎn guān chūn qiū zhī lín)
Shoots to the 'Wildcat's Head,'	射狸首 (shè lí shǒu)
465 Together with the 'Zouyu.' <sup>16</sup>	兼騶虞 (jiān zōu yú)
His corded arrows catch the 'Black Crane,' <sup>17</sup>	弋玄鶴 (yì xuán hè)
He dances the 'Shield and Axe.' <sup>18</sup>	舞干戚 (wǔ gān qī)
Carrying in his cart a cloud-net,	戴雲罕 (dài yún hǎn)
He captures a flock of refinement.	掄羣雅 (yǎn qún yǎ)
470 He grieves at 'Cutting Sandalwood,' <sup>19</sup>	悲伐檀 (bēi fá tán)
Delights in 'Rejoicing All,' <sup>20</sup>	樂樂胥 (lè lè xù)
Cultivates His deportment in the garden of <i>Rites</i> ,	修容乎禮園 (xiū róng hū lǐ yuán)
Roams and rambles in the park of <i>Documents</i> .	翱翔乎書圃 (áo xiáng hū shū pǔ)
Transmitting the Way of the <i>Changes</i> ,	述易道 (shù yì dào)
475 He releases the strange beasts,	放怪獸 (fàng guài shòu)
Ascends the Luminous Hall,	登明堂 (dēng míng táng)
Sits in the Pure Temple,	坐清廟 (zuò qīng miào)

Gives free rein to the many ministers	恣羣臣	(zì qún chén)
To present advice and criticism,	奏得失	(zòu dé shī)
480 And within the four seas,	四海之內	(sì hǎi zhī nèi)
No one is denied reward.	靡不受獲	(mí bú shòu huò)

“At this time, all in the empire greatly rejoice, face his virtuous wind and heed its sound, follow his current and are reformed, spontaneously promote the Way and revert to morality. Punishments are discarded and no longer are used. His virtue is loftier than that of the Three Kings, and his achievements are more abundant than those of the Five Emperors. Only under these conditions can hunting be enjoyed.

於斯之時，天下大說，鄉風而聽，隨流而化，岷然興道而遷義，刑錯而不用，德隆於三皇，功羨於五帝。若此，故獵乃可喜也。

490 “As for	若夫	(ruò fū)
Gallop and riding all day long,	終日馳騁	(zhōng rì chí chěng)
Tiring the spirit, straining the body,	勞神苦形	(láo shén kǔ xíng)
Exhausting the utility of carriage and horses,	罷車馬之用	(bà jū mǎ zhī yòng)
Sapping the energy of officers and men,	耗士卒之精	(wán shì zú zhī jīng)
Wasting the wealth of treasures and storehouses,	費府庫之財	(fèi fǔ kù zhī cái)
495 While depriving the people of generous beneficence:	而無德厚之恩	(ér wú dé hòu zhī ēn)
Striving only for selfish pleasure;	務在獨樂	(wù zài dú lè)
Not caring for the common people,	不顧眾庶	(bú gù zhòng shù)
Ignoring the administration of the state,	忘國家之政	(wàng guó jiā zhī zhèng)
Craving only a catch of pheasants or hares,	貪雉菟之獲	(tān zhì tù zhī huò)
500 These are things a benevolent ruler would not do.	則仁者不繇也	(zé rén zhě bù yóu yě)

“Looking at it from this perspective, are not the actions of Qi and Chu lamentable? Their territory does not exceed a thousand leagues square, yet their parks occupy nine hundred of them. This means the vegetation cannot be cleared, and the people have nothing to eat. If someone of the insignificance of a vassal lord enjoys the extravagances fit only for an emperor, I fear the common people will suffer the ill effects.”

從此觀之，齊楚之事，豈不哀哉！地方不過千里，而園居九百，是草

木不得墾辟，而民無所食也。夫以諸侯之細，而樂萬乘之所侈，僕恐百姓被其尤也。

Thereupon, the two gentlemen paled, changed expressions, and seemed dispirited and lost in thought. As they retreated and backed away from the mat, they said, “Your humble servants have been stubborn and uncouth, and ignorant of the prohibitions. Now this day we have received your instruction. We respectfully accept your command.”

於是二子愀然改容，超若自失，逡巡避席，曰：鄙人固陋，不知忌諱，乃今日見教，謹受命矣。

[SJ 117.3016–3043; HS 57.2547–2575; WX 8.361–378]



Sima Xiangru's masterwork is his “*Fu* on the Imperial Park.” The traditional account of how Sima Xiangru happened to compose this piece is somewhat amusing. Sima Xiangru was living in Chengdu when he received a summons, perhaps in the year 137 B.C.E., to have an audience with Emperor Wu in the capital. It seems that one day Emperor Wu chanced upon a copy of a piece that Sima Xiangru had written at the court of Liang, “*Fu* of Sir Vacuous.” This poem, which is a lavish description of the hunting preserve of the ancient state of Chu, so impressed the young emperor that he exclaimed to his attendant, Yang Deyi, “Shall We alone not have the privilege of being this man's contemporary?” Yang Deyi, who was a native of Shu, informed the emperor that his fellow townsman Sima Xiangru was the author of this piece. Emperor Wu immediately issued a summons for Sima Xiangru to appear at court.

This story is not very credible for several reasons. First, one wonders how a text of the “*Fu* of Sir Vacuous,” which was written in Liang, reached the imperial court. Even accepting the dubious proposition that someone in Liang sent a copy of this piece to the imperial archives, one is endlessly fascinated at the prospect of the nineteen-year-old Emperor Wu sitting in his palace study with a bundle of bamboo strips trying to decipher the text of a *fu* written in a difficult script and replete with rare words. This is a wonderful story, but it strains credibility.

According to the traditional account, in his audience with Emperor Wu,

Sima Xiangru belittled the quality of his earlier composition, which after all concerns only the “affairs of the vassal lords.” He then offered to compose for the emperor a “*fu* on the excursions and hunts of the Son of Heaven.” With brushes and bamboo slips given to him by the master of writing, Sima Xiangru composed a long *fu* on the imperial hunting park, Shanglin Park. Emperor Wu was so pleased with the poem that he appointed Sima Xiangru to a position at the imperial court. Although there is nothing implausible about this part of the account, one wonders how much the historian has embellished it to fit the conventional story of the scholar-poet from the hinterland who rises from obscurity to prominence at the imperial court.

“*Fu* on the Imperial Park” begins with Lord No-such admonishing the emissaries of Chu and Qi for failing to “elucidate the duties of ruler and subject or to correct the ritual behavior of the vassal lords.” He accuses them of “competing over the pleasures of excursions and games, the size of parks and preserves, wishing to overwhelm each other with wasteful ostentation and surpass one another in wild excesses.” Such things, he claims, only serve to defame one’s ruler and do injury to oneself. He then proceeds with the most lavish account of them all, a description of Shanglin Park. Most of the first part of the *fu* consists of a series of catalogs of rivers, water animals, birds, mountains, plants, land animals, palaces, stones and gems, trees, and the animals that dwell within them. He follows with an effusive portrayal of what purports to be a typical excursion-hunt, although virtually all of the account is full of hyperbole meant to impress the reader with the emperor’s power. At one point, the emperor soars aloft and, as a companion of the gods, chases fabulous creatures through the sky. At the end of this celestial journey, the emperor descends to earth, where he moves rapidly through palaces and towers, and halts at a hall where he holds a banquet accompanied by song and dance.

In the midst of merriment and intoxication with wine, the emperor suddenly becomes lost in contemplation. As he reflects on the extravagance of his excursions, he fears that his successors will imitate his behavior. Resolving to abandon the activity, he dismisses hunters and revelers, and opens the park for the use of the common people. He now resolves to turn his attention to matters of state. He declares that he will model his conduct on the Confucian classics and that he will perform the proper rituals. By this action, the emperor becomes the equal of the great sage-rulers of antiquity, and thus he is superior to the princes of Chu and

Qi, who are portrayed in the “*Fu* of Sir Vacuous” as rulers who sacrificed the welfare of the common people to their own pursuit of idle pastimes. At this point, Sir Vacuous and Master Improbable are overwhelmed and speechless. When they finally manage a reply, they say, “Your humble servants have been stubborn and uncouth, and ignorant of the prohibitions. Now this day we have received your instruction. We respectfully accept your command.”

The emperor for whom Sima Xiangru wrote “*Fu* on the Imperial Park,” Emperor Wu, ascended the imperial throne at the age of sixteen and ruled for more than half a century, from 140 to 87 B.C.E. During Emperor Wu’s reign, the Han fully consolidated its power internally and began to expand into new territories. Emperor Wu’s generals led military expeditions, which gained the Han control over new territory in the northeast, southeast, southwest, and west. Emperor Wu’s expeditions to what the Chinese of the Han called the Western Regions increased Chinese knowledge of Central Asia and opened trade routes that brought countless precious objects, rare animals, and plants to the imperial storehouses and imperial park. The era of Emperor Wu was an age of great pride in the might and magnificence of the empire, and much of the cultural activity of the period is fundamentally “imperial.” Thus during this period, the religious rites, education, philosophical thought, art, music, and literature were all related in important ways to the institution and person of the emperor.

“*Fu* on the Imperial Park” is a type of *fu* called *dafu* (literally, large *fu*). Such pieces are called “large” because they are long, but also because they are on grand topics such as capitals, palaces, and parks. The *dafu* usually have a tripartite structure consisting of a “head” (*shou*), “middle” (*zhong*), and “tail” (*wei*). In the head, the poet introduces the topic. In “*Fu* on the Imperial Park,” the head occupies all of part I, in which the imperial spokesman Lord No-such belittles the expositions of the emissaries from Chu and Qi and then proposes to describe for them the superior features of Shanglin Park. The middle is the longest section of the *fu*, which extends for some four hundred lines from part II through part X. In this section, Sima Xiangru describes the park’s terrain, lists the various creatures and objects that are found there, and gives a brief account of the imperial hunt. The tail, which begins with part XI, is the moralistic conclusion, in which the emperor is portrayed as repudiating the extravagance of the park and transforming himself into a dutiful sovereign who shows concern for the livelihood of his people.

Although Sima Xiangru did not compose “*Fu* on the Imperial Park” for any particular occasion, it is a celebratory poem. During the Former Han, the court held elaborate spectacles, including hunts, military reviews, pageants, and ceremonies. Most of these events were celebrated in verse, and the favored verse form was the *fu*. In all these activities, one can see a common aesthetic, what I have termed “beauty of the large.” The first occurrence of this term is in “*Fu* on the Imperial Park.” At the beginning of the piece, Lord No-such lectures the representatives from Chu and Qi for failing to discuss the proper duties of ruler and subject and to admonish their lords for their dissolute behavior. He then asks them: “Have you not seen the beauty of the large? Have you not heard of the Imperial Park of the Son of Heaven?”

The term that is translated as “beauty of the large” is *ju li*. The second part of the expression is the word *li*, which literally means “beauty,” but also implies the idea of brilliance, splendor, and display. The word *ju*, which I have translated as “large,” actually describes a size greater than simply “large.” In describing people, it means a person who is larger than ordinary persons—that is, a giant. In his use of *ju*, Sima Xiangru perhaps wished to convey the idea that the beauty of the imperial park is something grander and larger than that of other royal parks. In this sense, *ju* means “monumental” or “colossal.” One could also translate *ju li* as “monumental beauty” or “colossal beauty.”

The aesthetic of the large is clearly reflected in the courtly *fu* of the Emperor Wu period. In “*Fu* on the Imperial Park,” Sima Xiangru presents an elaborate description of the imperial park and the spectacles that take place there. Sima Xiangru portrays the imperial park as a locus of imperial prestige and majesty. He praises the park and the activities that take place there as a way of celebrating imperial splendor and power. The purpose of the catalogs of rare creatures and luxury goods that he includes in his *fu* was to provide concrete evidence of the Han court’s power and prestige. The park also was the major center for conducting military reviews and maneuvers. The grand structures of the park, and the military parades and hunts staged there, served to impress visitors, particularly those from foreign places, with the might and magnificence of the Han imperium.

The aesthetic that informs the catalogs of “*Fu* on the Imperial Park” is that of fullness, all-inclusiveness, abundance, and amplitude. The Han *fu* poets replicated in their *fu* the desire of the Han imperial court to fill the park with as many things—precious objects, animals, birds, plants—as

possible. This tendency to celebrate plenitude is reflected in the following passage from the Later Han *fu* writer Zhang Heng (78–139), who says that the plants, animals, and birds in the park were so numerous that they could not all be counted:

Plants here did grow;  
Animals here did rest.  
Flocks of birds fluttered about;  
Herds of beasts galloped and raced.  
They scattered like startled waves,  
Gathered like tall islands in the sea.  
Bo Yi would have been unable to name them all;  
Li Shou would have been unable to count them all.  
The riches of the groves and forests—  
In what were they lacking?<sup>21</sup>

The attempt of the *fu* writer to provide an exhaustive account imbues the *fu* with amplitude and all-inclusiveness, which E. M. W. Tillyard has identified as a quality of the “epic spirit.”<sup>22</sup> Completeness, comprehensiveness, and immensity are as important to the “large *fu*” as they are to the epic. The enumeration of the profusion of things is a distinguishing feature of the *dafu*. The fifth-century Chinese literary critic **Liu Xie** (ca. 465–ca. 522) said that Sima Xiangru’s “*Fu* on the Imperial Park” achieved beauty because of its profusion of things “grouped by kind”—that is, his catalogs.<sup>23</sup> Han *fu* writers themselves speak about this feature of the genre. For example, Yang Xiong (53 B.C.E.–18 C.E.) says the following about the process of writing a *fu*: “[The writer of a *fu*] must speak by setting forth things by kind. He uses the most luxuriant and ornate language, grossly exaggerates and greatly amplifies, striving to make it such that another person cannot add anything to it.”<sup>24</sup> Yang Xiong calls attention to the full and overflowing quality of the *fu*, in terms of both its style and its content. His statement that one should fill up the poem with catalogs of names and a profusion of words to the point that no one could think of anything else to add is a reflection of the aesthetic of the large that dominates courtly *fu* writing.

There is even a statement attributed to Sima Xiangru that eloquently expresses the *fu* aesthetic of completeness, totality, wholeness, and amplitude: “[T]he heart of a *fu* writer embraces the entire universe and



broadly observes humans and things.”<sup>25</sup> This statement is usually understood to mean that the *fu* writer attempts to create an exhaustive definition of his subject. Thus “*Fu* on the Imperial Park” is more than a simple description of the hunting park; it is, in effect, a praise poem to the Han dynasty and its ruler. A distinctive feature of Sima Xiangru’s style is the frequent use of lavish description and overstatement. Liu Xie termed this quality “exaggerated ornamentation” (*kua shi*). According to Liu Xie, this practice began with the Chu poet Song Yu (fl. third century B.C.E.) and reached its peak in what he called the “eccentric effusions” of Sima Xiangru.<sup>26</sup> One of Sima Xiangru’s favorite devices of exaggerated ornamentation was hyperbole. Thus Shanglin Park’s lodges are so high:

Shooting stars pass through doors and wickets;	奔星更於閭闔	( <i>bēn xīng gēng yú guān tà</i> )
Arching rainbows stretch over the rails and porches.	宛虹拖於楯軒	( <i>wǎn hóng tuō yú shǔn xuān</i> )

The park extends so far that it has separate seasons in its northern and southern halves:

To the south	其南則	( <i>qí nán zé</i> )
In deepest winter there are germination and growth,	隆冬生長	( <i>lóng dōng shēng zhǎng</i> )
Bubbling waters, and surging waves.	涌水躍波	( <i>yǒng shuǐ yuè bō</i> )
.....		
To the north	其北則	( <i>qí běi zé</i> )
In full summer it is enveloped in freezing cold that		
cleaves the ground;	盛夏含凍裂地	( <i>shèng xià hán dòng liè dì</i> )
One lifts his skirt to cross the iced-over streams.	涉冰揭河	( <i>shè bīng jiē hé</i> )

The park is so large:

Look at it, and it has no beginning;	視之無端	( <i>shì zhī wú duān</i> )
Examine it, and it has no end.	察之無涯	( <i>chá zhī wú yá</i> )
The sun rises from its eastern pond,	日出東沼	( <i>rì chū dōng zhǎo</i> )
Sets at its western dike.	入虜西陂	( <i>rù lǔ xī bēi</i> )

The effect of these exaggerations is to demonstrate that the park and the Han emperor occupy the center of the cosmos, and that everything

radiates from the seat of imperial power. Thus Shanglin Park, in effect, stands *pars pro toto* for the empire at large, and the panoply of rare and exotic objects that are contained in it are representations of the profusion of marvelous things that exist within the Han cultural sphere. As such, they evoke associations with the magnificence and might of the Han empire. Although Sima Xiangru's rhapsody contains warnings to Emperor Wu about the folly of ostentation and extravagance, they are secondary to his lavish and flattering portrayal of the institution and person of the emperor.

Another important feature of the *fu* is the quality known as *pu* or *puchen*. During the Han period, the word *fu* was often explained with homophones that basically have the same meaning, "to spread out" or "to display": *fu* (*phjah*), *bu* (*pak*), and *pu* (*phjuoh*). During the Six Dynasties period, literary critics began identifying "display" as a defining feature of the *fu* genre. For example, **Zhi Yu** (d. 211) said that "*fu* is a term meaning 'display,'" and *fu* is "a means by which the writer devises images and exploits language to the utmost to display his intent."<sup>27</sup> Liu Xie, in the ***Wenxin diaolong*** (*The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*), makes "display" an essential stylistic feature of *fu* composition: "*Fu* means to display: to display ornament and exhibit refinement, to give form to an object and express intent."<sup>28</sup> This display quality of the *fu* I term "epideictic." The word "epideictic" is derived from the Greek word meaning "display," and thus it is a good parallel with the Chinese terms *pu* and *puchen*. In the Han *fu*, the epideictic style is characterized by extensive cataloging, use of polysyllabic descriptive expressions, and repetition of synonyms. The following passage, which describes the rivers in the park, is a good example of the epideictic style:

Soaring and leaping, surging and swelling,	洶湧澎湃	( <i>hjang-rjang phrang-phrat</i> )
Spurting and spouting, rushing and racing,	湍弗宓汨	( <i>pjət-pjəi mjət-gjwət</i> )
Pressing and pushing, clashing and colliding,	偪側泌瀾	( <i>pjak-tsɾjak pjət-tsɾət</i> )
Flowing uncontrolled, bending back,	橫流逆折	( <i>grwang liəhw njiak tsjat</i> )
Wheeling and rearing, beating and battering,	轉騰激洑	( <i>trjwan dəng pjət-ljat</i> )

Swelling and surging, troublous and turbulent.	滂湃沆漑	( <i>phang-phjiat gang-grat</i> )
Loftily arching, billowing like clouds,	穹隆雲橈	( <i>khjəng-ljəng gjiwən nrahw</i> )
Sinuously snaking, curling and coiling,	宛潭膠盤	( <i>/jiwan-djanx krehw-liat</i> )
Outracing their own waves, rushing to the chasms,	逾波趨浥	( <i>rjah pai tshrjah /jək</i> )
Lap, lap, they descend to the shoals.	涖涖下瀨	( <i>ljət-ljət grah lat</i> )
Striking the bluffs, hurtling against the dikes,	批巖衝擁	( <i>phiei ngram thjuang /juang</i> )
Racing and swelling, spraying and spuming.	奔揚滯沛	( <i>pən rang drjat-pat</i> )
Nearing the sandbars, they pour into gullies,	臨坻注壑	( <i>ljəng drjat tjuah hak</i> )
Plashing and splashing as they tumble downward.	澗澗貫壁	( <i>dzram-dzrəkw gjwən-drjwət</i> )
Deep, deep, full, full,	沈沈隱隱	( <i>shjəng-shjəng /jən-/jən</i> )
Rumbling and roaring, bellowing and blustering,	砰磅訇礚	( <i>phring-phang grwing khap</i> )
Bubbling and boiling, gushing and gurgling,	滴滴淅淅	( <i>kjwət-kjwət kət-kət</i> )
Foaming and frothing like a seething cauldron,	淞淞鼎沸	( <i>thrjak-tsjak ting pjwət</i> )
Speeding waves, flinging spray,	馳波跳沫	( <i>djai pai diahw mat</i> )
They swiftly swirl, furious and fast.	汨滄漂疾	( <i>gwjət-hjak phjhaw dzjət</i> )

The transcription in the right-hand column is an approximation of the pronunciation during the Han.<sup>29</sup> Its purpose is to call attention to the rhyming and alliteration, which is not always evident in modern Mandarin pronunciation. For example, the two syllables in *bice* do not rhyme in modern Mandarin pronunciation, but, in the Han dynasty Chinese *pjak-tsrijək*, they rhyme perfectly. Similarly, the modern Mandarin *hangxie* does not alliterate, but the Han dynasty reading *gang-grat* does. The phonetic representation of the passage shows the strong auditory quality of the *fu*.

Thus Sima Xiangru employed numerous alliterative and rhyming binomes: *xiongyong* (*hjang-rjang* [soaring and leaping]), *pengpai* (*phrang-phrat* [surging and swelling]), *bifei* (*pjət-pjəi* [spurting and spouting]), *bice* (*pjak-tsrijək* [pressing and pushing]), and *pielie* (*phat-ljat* [beating and battering]). Some of the expressions are synonyms, such as *juejue* (*kjwət-kjwət*) and *gugu* (*kət-kət*), both of which describe the bubbling and frothing of the waters. They are also probably onomatopoeic expressions.

The presence of so many alliterative and rhyming words in this passage provides evidence for another important quality of the *fu* in the Han period—its oral, recitative character. The primary medium of

presentation of *fu* at the Former Han court was oral. Although we do not know whether “*Fu* on the Imperial Park” was actually performed after Sima Xiangru completed it, we do know that Emperor Wu employed professional rhapsodes, who not only recited but also extemporaneously composed *fu* for various court occasions. One of Emperor Wu’s favorite rhapsodes was Mei Gao (fl. ca. 140 B.C.E.), who was at the Han court at the same time as Sima Xiangru. Mei Gao probably was the most prolific *fu* writer of the Former Han. A catalog of the imperial library compiled at the end of the Former Han dynasty recorded 120 *fu* under his name.<sup>30</sup> Regrettably, none of his works survives. According to his biography in the *Han shu* (*History of the Han Dynasty*), Mei Gao

accompanied the emperor when he went to Sweet Springs, Yong, and Hedong; made inspection tours of the east; performed *feng* sacrifices on Mount Tai; diked the break at Xuanfeng Temple on the Yellow River; went sightseeing at the touring palaces and lodges of the Three Capital Districts; visited mountains and marshes; and participated in fowling, hunting, shooting, chariot driving, dog and horse races, football matches, and engravings. Whenever there was something that moved His Highness, he immediately had Mei Gao rhapsodize [*fu*] on it. He composed quickly, and no sooner received the summons than he was finished. Thus, the pieces he rhapsodized are numerous.<sup>31</sup>

Although the text does not specifically state that Mei Gao chanted the poems, the fact that it does use *fu* in its verbal sense (to *fu* something, to recite a poem about, to chant), as well as the speed with which he composed, suggest that at least some of his *fu* were extemporaneous oral compositions.

The textual history of “*Fu* on the Imperial Park” also tells us something about the oral quality of the piece. There are two early versions of the poem, one in the *Shiji* (*Records of the Grand Scribe*), compiled by **Sima Qian** (145–86? B.C.E.), and the other in the *Han shu*, compiled by **Ban Gu** (32–92). Although the *Shiji* antedates the *Han shu*, through textual analysis, scholars have determined that the version of “*Fu* on the Imperial Park” included in the *Han shu* is earlier than that found in the *Shiji*. Many of the differences between the two texts involve the writing of alliterative and rhyming compounds as well as the names found in the various lists

of animals, birds, and plants. For example, where the *Han shu* writes 屬玉 (*zhuyu*), the *Shiji* gives 鸛鳥 + 玉 (*zhuyu*) for “white heron.” The latter form, which adds the “bird” classifier on the left-hand side, is clearly an emendation intended to add a semantic element to the graph. A large number of the words in the *History of the Han Dynasty* do not have these semantic classifiers. It should be noted that when Sima Xiangru composed his *fu*, there were no standard forms for writing many words, especially the rare and difficult expressions that occur in “*Fu* on the Imperial Park.” Because many of the words that Sima Xiangru used did not have standard orthography, the original text of his *fu* must have contained numerous graphs that we probably would not easily recognize today. It is quite probable that the poet simply transcribed the words based solely on their sounds. Thus this would explain the absence of semantic classifiers in the *Han shu* version. In addition, if the *fu* were recited, as many scholars now believe was the case, the poet would have transcribed it phonetically using homophonous graphs to represent the unusual and rare words.

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#### NOTES

1. In the Zhou period, various states were designated as “defensive barriers” of the Zhou kingdom. Qi was the defensive barrier in the east.
2. The modern romanizations of the verse part of this poem were added by the editor.
3. Sushen was a non-Chinese state probably located on the Liaodong Peninsula.
4. This line refers to the king of Qi’s hunts in Qingqiu, a foreign kingdom located in either the China Sea or Korea.
5. Cangwu refers to Jiuyi Mountain, located in modern Hunan. This is the traditional location of the burial place of the legendary emperor Shun. However, this direction is to the south, rather than the east, of Shanglin Park. Thus some scholars have speculated that an artificial mountain named Cangwu was constructed in the eastern limits of the park.
6. Western Limits is the name for the western terminus of the Han empire. A river named Bin flowed through this area, and it is possible that Shanglin Park had a replica of it.
7. The Cinnabar River probably flowed to the south of Shanglin Park.
8. Purple Gulf should be the name of a river located to the north of the park; however, the exact location of this river is not certain.
9. Lines 32–34: the Ba, Chan, Jing, Wei, Feng, Hao, Lao, and Jue are rivers that flowed from the southern part of the park north to the Wei River.
10. Jiuzong Mountain is located about thirty miles northwest of Chang’an.
11. The Southern Mountains are the Zhongnan Mountains, located directly south of Chang’an.
12. Wo Quan is the name of an immortal.
13. Lines 354–358: the Stone Gateway, Great Peak Tower, Jaybird Tower, Dewy Chill Lodge, and Pear Palace were all in the Sweet Springs Palace, located about seventy-five miles northwest of Chang’an.
14. Befitting Spring was located in the eastern part of the imperial park.

15. Lines 360–363: Xuanqu Palace was located near Kunming Pond, which was an artificial lake in the park just to the west of Chang'an. Oxhead Lake and Dragon Terrace were located in the western part of the park. Lithe Willows was a viewing tower located to the south of Kunming Pond.

16. "Wildcat's Head" and "Zouyu" were two musical pieces that were played for the archery performance of the emperor and vassal lords, respectively.

17. "Black Crane" is the name of a dance composition reputedly composed by the ancient sage-ruler Shun.

18. "Shield and Axe" was an ancient military dance.

19. "Cutting Sandalwood" is a poem in the *Book of Poetry* that is traditionally interpreted as criticizing greedy, incompetent officials who deprived worthy men of their rightful positions.

20. "Rejoicing All" is a phrase from a poem in the *Book of Poetry* that describes the vassal lords coming to court to receive favors from the ruler.

21. Xiao Tong, comp., *Wen xuan, or Selections of Refined Literature*, vol. 1, *Rhapsodies on Metropolises and Capitals*, trans. David R. Knechtges (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982), 207, with minor changes.

22. E. M. W. Tillyard, *The English Epic and Its Background* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 6–8.

23. Liu Xie, *Wenxin diaolong (The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons)* (Sibu beiyao ed.), 2.14b.

24. Quoted in Ban Gu, *Han shu (History of the Han Dynasty)* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 87B.3575.

25. Quoted in *Xijing zaji (Miscellaneous Notes on the Western Capital)* (Sibu congkan ed.), 2.4a.

26. Liu Xie, *Wenxin diaolong* 8.4a.

27. Zhi Yu, "Wenzhang liubie lun" (Treatise on Literature Divided by Genre), in *Zhongguo lidai wenlun xuan (An Anthology of Writings on Literature Through the Ages)*, ed. Guo Shaoyu (1962; repr., Hong Kong: Zhonghua shuju, 1979), 157.

28. Liu Xie, *Wenxin diaolong* 2.13a.

29. I base the reconstructions on W. South Coblin's studies of Western Han phonology: "Notes on the Western Han Initials," *Tsing Hua Journal of Chinese Studies* 14, nos. 1–2 (1982): 111–132, and "Some Sound Changes in the Western Han Dialect of Shu," *Journal of Chinese Linguistics* 14, no. 2 (1986): 184–225.

30. Ban Gu, *Han shu* 30.1749.

31. Ban Gu, *Han shu* 51.2367.

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## ***Shi* Poetry**

### Music Bureau Poems (*Yuefu*)

The *yuefu* poetry of the Han dynasty, conventionally referring to all poems reputedly collected by the Han Music Bureau, is one of the earliest poetic modes to have had a major impact on the later Chinese lyrical tradition. In Han times, the *fu* (rhapsody or rhyme-prose) was the dominant literary genre and arena in which the major court poets exercised their talents, while *yuefu* poetry, aside from ritual hymns, was basically ignored. Nonetheless, *yuefu* verse came to be juxtaposed with the *fu* as one of the two most conspicuous literary genres in the Han. To properly understand *yuefu* poetry as a genre, one must investigate its history, themes and content, literary conventions, and stylistic characteristics. Critical issues regarding this genre also include the origins and historical date of the establishment of the Music Bureau, the classification of *yuefu*, the authenticity of the extant *yuefu* poems, and authorship. Are *yuefu* poems folk ballads of simple provenance collected by the imperial court, or are they simply literati imitations by anonymous authors or court musicians? Despite these controversial issues, *yuefu* verse occupies an unshakable position in Chinese poetry.

Due to the several contradictory statements by the Han historian **Ban Gu** (32–92) in the *Han shu* (*History of the Han Dynasty*), generations of scholars had believed that the Music Bureau was established by Emperor Wu (**Han Wudi** [r. 140–87 B.C.E.]). However, in 1976 a bell inscribed with the word *yuefu* was excavated around the periphery of the tomb of the first Qin emperor, Qin Shi Huang,<sup>1</sup> and this archaeological find has proven beyond doubt that the bureau was, at the latest, founded in the Qin (221–206 B.C.E.). Although Emperor Wu probably did not originate the



institution of the Music Bureau, he certainly was the first ruler to greatly expand its functions, which included providing music for court ceremonies and state sacrifices and allegedly collecting folk songs. The bureau was abolished by Emperor Ai (Han Aidi [r. 7–1 B.C.E.]) in 7 B.C.E. because Confucian scholars had complained about the licentiousness of the regional songs and music, which had been brought into the bureau for court entertainment.<sup>2</sup> The extant Han *yuefu* corpus includes two major types of songs: the first is ceremonial and sacrificial hymns, and the second is popular songs written mainly in pentasyllabic lines on a great variety of topics. The former is verifiably Han, since they are recorded in the *Han shu*. But the latter, attributed to the Han period, is preserved only in post-Han sources; thus it is difficult to substantiate whether these songs were originally collected by the Han Music Bureau or written by Han authors. The concept that the ruler could view the customs of his subjects and thereby learn their state of mind dates back to the pre-Qin periods. However, as early as the Southern Dynasties, Shen Yue (441–513) states in the “Yueshu” (Monograph on Music), collected in the *Song shu* (*History of the Liu Song Dynasty*), that there were no song-collecting officials in either the Qin or the Han.<sup>3</sup> Modern scholars, East and West, have also supported this view.<sup>4</sup> Despite this scholarly consensus, it is possible that some of the regional songs mentioned in the “Summary of Poetry and Rhapsodies” were among those collected.<sup>5</sup>

In this chapter, I discuss these ritual hymns and popular *yuefu* verses in order, providing the historical and cultural backgrounds of these poems and analyses of their content, style, and cultural significance.



One of the two most important, extant sets of ritual songs of the Han is the “An shi fangzhong ge” (Songs to Pacify the World, for Inside the Palace). The *Han shu* attributes the authorship to Lady Tangshan, the wife of the Han founder, Liu Bang (**Han Gaozu** [r. 206–194 B.C.E.]), around 206 B.C.E.<sup>6</sup> But both the *Sui shu* (*History of the Sui Dynasty*) and the *Beishi* (*History of the Northern Dynasties*) attribute this set of poems to the pre-Qin erudite Shusun Tong (fl. 205–188 B.C.E.).<sup>7</sup> Later, in the Song dynasty, Chen Yang (twelfth century) emphasizes in the *Yueshu* (*Monograph on Music*) that Lady Tangshan only matched the songs with Chu music. Setting the songs in the Chu mode (surely unorthodox in the ritual tradition) would have been in order to please Liu Bang, whose hometown was in the Chu area. There are seventeen songs in total in the

*Han shu*, although some scholars have suggested that they actually number twelve or sixteen. In 194 B.C.E., the head of the Music Bureau, Xiahou Kuan (fl. 193 B.C.E.), was ordered to arrange the songs for flute accompaniment. The name of this set of songs was then changed to “An shi yue” (Songs to Pacify the World). In terms of style, thirteen of these songs were composed in the solemn tetrasyllabic meter. This is the classical style for eulogy in the ancient ***Shijing*** (*The Book of Poetry*) and thus suitable for such ceremonial occasions. Written to praise the achievements of the Han ruler, the poems resemble the eulogies in the *Shijing*. Four of the poems are in trisyllabic meter or in an unusual mixture of seven- and three-syllable lines. The trisyllabic meter, which is rarely seen in any pre-Han poetic collections, is a special feature of the ritual hymns and other *yuefu* verses of the Han. The seven-syllable style is even more unusual, since it is found mainly in Han popular sayings and primers for children as a means for learning characters quickly (such as the *Ji jiu pian* [*Primer for Quickly Learning Chinese Characters*], by Shi You [fl. 48–33 B.C.E.]), and did not become widely accepted by literati until the late fifth century. The first song opens with an exclamation about filial piety, one of the central ideas of the series:

#### C4.1

#### Songs to Pacify the World, for Inside the Palace, No. 1

		安世房中歌	(ān shì fáng zhōng gē)
	Grand filial piety is complete!	大孝備矣	(dà xiào bèi yǐ)
2	Excellent virtue is magnificent and pure.	休德昭清	(xiū dé zhāo qīng)
	Hanging high are quadrangular frames,	高張四縣	(gāo zhāng sì xuán)
4	Music fills the courtyard.	樂充宮庭	(yuè chōng gōng tíng)
	Fragrant trees and decorative plumes,	芬樹羽林	(fēn shù yǔ lín)
6	Darken the area like clouds and shadows.	雲景杳冥	(yún yǐng yǎo míng)
	Golden boughs and flourishing flowers,	金支秀華	(jīn zhī xiù huā)
8	Numerous yak-tail flags and kingfisher banners!	庶旄翠旌	(shù máo cuì jīng)
	The Seven Beginnings and the Beginning of Quintessence of Myriad Things,	七始華始	(qī shǐ huā shǐ)
10	Are sung solemnly in harmony.	肅倡和聲	(sù chàng hé shēng)
	The gods will come enjoying the banquet,	神來晏娛	(shén lái yàn yú)
12	We sincerely hope they will listen to the music.	庶幾是聽	(shù jǐ shì tīng)

The standard, punctuated *Han shu* version of the poem ends at line 8; however, I have followed Wang Xianqian (1842–1918) and Lu Qinli (1911–1973) by adding the four lines that, in the 1962 Zhonghua edition, belong to the second song. This first song begins by praising filial piety and continues with an elaborate depiction of the frames for musical instruments, decorative plumes, and banners. According to the commentary of Meng Kang (ca. 180–260), the “Seven Beginnings” (Qishi [heaven, earth, the four seasons, and man]) and the “Beginning of Quintessence of Myriad Things” refer to musical pieces. Judging from their titles, they were probably used to celebrate the imperial ancestors, the beginning of the royal lineage. Scholars have pointed out that “Songs to Pacify the World” especially emphasize filial piety and virtue, which are key concepts deeply rooted in the culture of the Zhou and Qin dynasties in general. The poem therefore contains a moral message, conveyed through a combination of music, poetry, ritual, and ethical codes. Not until the last few lines is the reader informed about the arrival of the gods. It then becomes clear that the musical instruments and decorations are displayed for the purpose of sacrifices and ritual. This first song is designed to invite the gods or the ancestors to descend to the temple; thus the luxurious display of musical instruments is proper. Wang Xianqian has suggested that lines 5 and 6 do not refer to musical instruments; rather, they are descriptive of the numerous gods.<sup>8</sup> But from the context, it seems that both interpretations are acceptable. The content of poem no. 3 further proves that this set of poems must have been written to extol the Han ancestors:

## C4.2

### Songs to Pacify the World, for Inside the Palace, No. 3

We set the calendar,	我定曆數 (wǒ dìng lì shù)
2 Informing my subjects what is on our mind.	人告其心 (rén gào qí xīn)

	We respectfully discipline ourselves and fast,	敕身齊戒	(chì shēn zhāi jiè)
4	Issue out our instructions cautiously.	施教申申	(shī jiào shēn shēn)
	Thereby we establish the ancestral temple,	乃立祖廟	(nǎi lì zǔ miào)
6	To pay respect and glorify our honorable ancestors.	敬明尊親	(jìng míng zūn qīn)
	Grand is splendid filial piety!	大矣孝熙	(dà yǐ xiào xī)
8	Subjects from the four extremes all arrive [to pay tribute].	四極爰臻	(sì jí yuán zhēn)

[HS 22.1047]

This poem adopts the imperial “we,” speaking in the persona of an emperor. Setting the calendar is certainly one of the most significant actions reserved exclusively for the Son of Heaven, since an accurate calendar would have a great impact on people’s lives in an agricultural society. Some commentators have interpreted *li shu* in line 1 as a heavenly order by which a ruler replaces the previous ruler. In other words, the emperor in the ritual wishes to inform his subjects that it is by heaven’s mandate that he has ascended the throne. The emperor then states that he has fasted and purified himself in order to hold sacrifices at the ancestral temple. In this passage, he demonstrates filial piety toward his royal ancestors, thereby conveying a moral message to his subjects. Through this ritual act of filial piety, the ruler is capable of inspiring loyalty from all the subjects residing even in the remotest areas. Despite the fact that it is unorthodox to adopt regional music for such a solemn occasion, this set of hymns is composed in the Chu mode, stressing Liu Bang’s devotion and feeling toward his native place and ancestry.

Another celebrated set of ritual hymns verifiably written in the Han are the nineteen songs of the “Jiaosi ge” (Songs for the Suburban Sacrifices), preserved in the “Monograph on Music and Rites” of the *Han shu*. It is recorded that Emperor Wu performed the suburban sacrifices in 133 B.C.E.; these sacrifices were ancient religious rites that reputedly had existed since the Western Zhou (1066–771 B.C.E.). According to the *Han shu*, at the time Emperor Wu established the suburban sacrifices, he began to worship the Grand Unity at the Sweet Spring Palace and, also at this time, established the Music Bureau.<sup>9</sup> He ordered the bureau to collect regional songs for night chanting and appointed Li Yannian (d. 87 B.C.E.) as commandant of musical harmony to set the music. Li often presented songs and rhapsodies composed by a number of writers, such

as **Sima Xiangru** (179–117 B.C.E.). The great historian **Sima Qian** (145–86? B.C.E.) commented that the lyrics of these songs were so difficult that scholars versed in only one classic could not interpret them, and it took masters in all the five classics to discuss them together in order to comprehend their general meaning. The content of this set of ritual hymns covers contemporary beliefs as well as state cults. These poems sing of the gods of the four directions and commemorate auspicious incidents or signs, such as the discovery of the sacred tripods and magical unicorns and plants. “Behold, the Grand Unity” is a poem dedicated to the highest celestial god of the Han:

### **C4.3**

<b>Behold, the Grand Unity</b>		惟泰元	(wéi tài yuán)
	Behold, the Grand Unity is the most esteemed,	惟泰元尊	(wéi tài yuán zūn)
2	We present abundant smoke in tribute to the gods to obtain numerous blessings.	嫗神蕃釐	(yùn shén fán lí)
	He created the warp and weft of heaven and earth,	經緯天地	(jīng wěi tiān dì)
4	And made the four seasons.	作成四時	(zuò chéng sì shí)
	His essence forms the sun and the moon,	精建日月	(jīng jiàn rì yuè)
6	Constellations are regulated and in order.	星辰度理	(xīng chén dù lǐ)
	Yin and Yang, and Five Phases	陰陽五行	(yīn yáng wǔ xíng)
8	Revolve and rejuvenate.	周而復始	(zhōu ér fù shǐ)
	He causes clouds, wind, thunder, lightning,	雲風雷電	(yún fēng léi diàn)
10	And lets fall sweet dew and rain.	降甘露雨	(jiàng gān lù yǔ)
	The people flourish and prosper,	百姓蕃滋	(bǎi xìng fán zī)
12	All following his lineage.	咸循厥緒	(xián xún jué xù)
	We continue this heritage, reverently and diligently,	繼統共勤	(jì tǒng gòng qín)
14	Following the virtue of the august heaven.	順皇之德	(shùn huáng zhī dé)
	Simurgh carriages spread like dragon scales,	鸞路龍鱗	(luán lù lóng lín)
16	None of them is not completely decorated.	罔不矜飾	(wǎng bú jīn shì)
	Fine ritual baskets are displayed,	嘉籩列陳	(jiā biān liè chén)
18	Sincerely hoping you will come to enjoy them.	庶幾宴享	(shù jǐ yàn xiǎng)
	You will reduce and rid disasters,	滅除凶災	(miè chú xiōng zāi)
20	Your splendor reaches the eight wilds.	烈騰八荒	(liè téng bā huāng)
	Bells, drums, pipes, and reed organ,	鐘鼓竿笙	(zhōng gǔ gān shēng)
22	The cloud dance soars and soars.	雲舞翔翔	(yún wǔ xiáng xiáng)
	The numinous banner painted with the Twinkling Indicator,	招搖靈旗	(zhāo yáo líng qí)
24	The Nine Yi tribes shall come to pay tribute in obedience.	九夷賓將	(jiǔ yí bīn jiāng)

[HS 22.1057]<sup>10</sup>

The first two lines are problematic in their various possible readings. The character *yun* in line 2, for example, can also be read as *ao*, meaning “old woman.” The commentators Li Qi (n.d.) and Yan Shigu (583–645) agree that *yuanzun* refers to heaven and *aoshen* to the goddess of the earth, although they disagree on the interpretation of the term *fanli*.<sup>11</sup> Wang Xianqian argues convincingly that *taiyuan* must refer to the Grand Unity because line 3 mentions that heaven and earth are controlled by the deity, and *yun* refers to the abundance of the smoke



created to communicate with the god.<sup>12</sup> The poem's opening laudatory exclamation to the deity is composed in the formal tetrasyllabic meter, appropriate to its ceremonial function. That the Grand Unity allegedly was a celestial spirit residing in the center of the polestar had tremendous influence on the formation of later Daoist beliefs in the power of this star. In this poem, he is described as the creator of the sun and the moon and as the regulator of the four seasons and the movements of the stars. The harmony of the universe and the generation of life are made possible through the Grand Unity, who transcends not only heaven and earth but also the five emperors of the five quarters. Lines 3–12 extol the awesome power of the god and his role in creation. Lines 13–18 effect a transition to the sacrificial ritual and an invitation to the god. In lines 19–24, the poem expresses the wish and supplication of the imperial house and of the people for the Grand Unity to confer blessings on them. The hymn ends with loud, triumphant music and a dance in which a banner representing the god causes the Nine Yi tribes from the remotest areas to come in surrender. The “Twinkling Indicator” refers to the star  $\gamma$  Boötes, which is also sometimes imagined as part of the Northern Dipper, or Big Dipper.<sup>13</sup> According to the *Shiji* (*Records of the Grand Scribe*), when the Han dynasty was about to attack Nanyue, a ritual banner painted with the sun, the moon, the Northern Dipper, and an ascending dragon was presented to the Grand Unity during a sacrifice.<sup>14</sup> There was probably a contemporary belief that the deity would protect the army and guarantee victory. This suggests the deity's role as war god and protector of the dynasty. To subdue the tribes on the border areas had been the ideal and dream for nearly all Chinese dynasties. The word *jiu* (line 24) in classical Chinese in many cases does not mean “nine” but denotes “many.” It was during Emperor Wu's reign that the borders of China were greatly expanded, and many more minority tribes came to pay tribute at court. In the poem's last lines, we sense a subtle fusion of the emperor with the Grand Unity, likely one of the poem's intended messages. By performing the sacrifice to the highest god, the emperor becomes an extension of the deity himself on earth who resides in the court, the center of China. Through him, order will reign, natural disasters will be eliminated, wars will be won, and all the people within China will live in harmony.

Despite their importance in the Han court, these sacrificial hymns had little influence on the development of Chinese poetry and functioned only within their limited religious spheres. They contain an abundance of archaic words, and they are read mostly by specialists today. Secular

*yuefu* songs, however, became a major source of poetic influence in medieval China. The extant Han *yuefu* corpus, composed mainly of poems in pentasyllabic lines, covers a great diversity of themes. I shall discuss poems on various topics of ordinary life that continue to be popular and widely read by Chinese readers even in modern times. Like the ritual hymns, the secular songs are assumed to have had a close relationship with music. In the most comprehensive *yuefu* collection, *Yuefu shiji* (*Collection of Yuefu Poetry*), the compiler Guo Maoqian (twelfth century) classified all the Music Bureau poems under twelve musical categories.<sup>15</sup> It is undeniable that *yuefu* poems must have had a musical association, since the evidence is in the titles themselves. We find many containing such musical terms as *jie* (stanzas), *yan* (prelude), *qu* (finale passage), and *luan* (envoi or coda).<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, we must bear in mind that since the music had been lost long before Guo's time, the classification of his musical categories must be viewed as speculative.

One of the best-known secular *yuefu* poems is "We Fought South of the Walls," a poem that contains antiwar sentiments and social concerns:

#### **C4.4**



<b>We Fought South of the Walls</b>		戰城南	(zhàn chéng nán)
	We fought south of the walls,	戰城南	(zhàn chéng nán)
2	And died north of the ramparts.	死郭北	(sǐ guō běi)
	Dead in the wilderness and unburied, the crows may eat us.	野死不葬烏可食	(yě sǐ bú zàng wū kě shí)
4	Tell the crows for us:	為我謂烏	(wèi wǒ wèi wū)
	“Cry for us strangers away from home!”	且為客豪	(qiě wèi kè háo)
6	We died on the moors, and certainly will not be buried.	野死諒不葬	(yě sǐ liàng bú zàng)
	How can our rotting flesh run away from you!	腐肉安能去子逃	(fǔ ròu ān néng qù zǐ táo)
8	The water is deep and clear,	水深激激	(shuǐ shēn jiào jiào)
	The rushes and reeds are dark.	蒲葦冥冥	(pú wěi míng míng)
10	Valiant steeds have died in battle,	梟騎戰鬪死	(xiāo jì zhàn dòu sǐ)
	While nags neigh, running around.	驚馬裴回鳴	(jīng mǎ péi huí míng)
12	Bridges have been made into houses,	梁築室	(liáng zhú shì)
	How can one go south?	何以南	(hé yǐ nán)
14	How can bridges go north?	梁何北	(liáng hé běi)
	How can the grain be harvested, what shall our lord eat?	禾黍而穫君何食	(hé shǔ ér huò jūn hé shí)
16	We wish to be loyal subjects, yet how can we achieve that!	願為忠臣安可得	(yuàn wéi zhōng chén ān kě dé)
	We long for you, fine vassals.	思子良臣	(sī zǐ liáng chén)
18	Fine vassals are truly worth longing for.	良臣誠可思	(liáng chén chéng kě sī)
	You went out in the morning to fight,	朝行出攻	(zhāo xíng chū gōng)
20	And in the evening you did not return.	莫不夜歸	(mò bú yè guī)

[SS 22.641]<sup>17</sup>

This poem belongs to the category of “Duanxiao nao ge” (Songs for Short Panpipe and Nao Bell), which was originally a type of martial music of the Northern Di (a minority tribe) and was introduced to the Han court for use in palace gatherings and processions. In style, the song contains three-, four-, five-, and even seven-syllable lines. The irregular, mixed meter is a feature of the *nao ge*. Immediately apparent is the striking dissimilarity of the content of the poem to the ritual poems, which are imbued with a completely imperial milieu: this work deals with the life of ordinary people. The persona, represented by the monologue of a dead soldier, is especially interesting. This technique was put into constant use by later *yuefu* imitators, especially in the pallbearer’s songs.

Some textual problems in the poem make it open to interpretation. For example, the word *liang* in line 12 sometimes is understood as an empty

particle, but other commentators take it as a content word meaning “bridges.” Also, many translators of the poem have adopted the third-person narrative voice, thereby rendering the poem a narrative told by an observer. I take it as spoken by the dead soldier because of the voice in line 4. This reading also creates a more dramatic effect than a third-person narrative. The world depicted in the poem is remote from that of the imperial rhapsodies and ritual hymns. Instead of employing ornate or archaic expressions, the language of the poem is straightforward and powerful. The stark misery of war is brought out by the soldier’s pitiable request to the crows to mourn for him and his fellow soldiers. The word *ke* (line 5) refers to a person far from home. The fact that the soldiers have traveled far away from their homes and died in a strange place without a proper burial would have been regarded as a great tragedy by the Chinese. It deeply touches Chinese sensibilities, since the ancient Chinese longed to grow old and die in their native place. That the corpses cannot run away but will surely decay and be eaten by the crows (line 7) is uttered in a heartrending voice with a bitter, sarcastic tone. Lines 13 and 14 describe the soldier’s loss of direction, illustrating his confusion and suffering in the cruel battlefield at the last moments of his life. Yet, despite the horrors, the poem has a patriotic element. The soldier expresses his wish to serve his lord with loyalty, despite his untimely death. The last four lines seem to be a response to the speaker’s patriotic wish and, at the same time, convey the poet’s sympathy toward the soldiers. The abrupt transition between lines 14 and 15 seems to indicate a corrupted text, but some scholars think that abruptness is one of the features of a folk song. A ballad of folk provenance implies an oral composition and transmission. In the process of transmission, the singer-poets could change the wording or phrasing to suit their own purposes, hence some texts may appear garbled and incoherent.<sup>18</sup>

Like that of “We Fought South of the Walls,” the theme of “Song of the East Gate” is related to social hardships:

#### **C4.5**

<b>Song of the East Gate</b>	出東門	(chū dōng mén)
Leaving by the East Gate	出東門	(chū dōng mén)
2 He did not look back.	不顧歸	(bú gù guī)
Coming through the door,	來入門	(lái rù mén)
4 He was melancholy and miserable.	悵欲悲	(chàng yù bēi)
In the basket there was not even a peck of rice in reserve!	盎中無斗儲	(àng zhōng wú dòu chú)
6 He looked back at the rack, no clothes hanging.	還視桁上無縣衣	(huán shì hàng shàng wú xuán yī)
He drew out a sword and leaves for the East Gate,	拔劍出門去	(bá jiàn chū mén qù)
8 At home his children and their mother clung to his clothes weeping.	兒女牽衣啼	(ér nǚ qiān yī tí)
"Other families only wish for wealth and position,"	它家但願富貴	(tā jiā dàn yuàn fù guì)
10 Your humble wife will share with you her gruel.	賤妾與君共餽糜	(jiàn qiè yǔ jūn gòng kǔ mí)
I will share gruel with you.	共餽糜	(gòng kǔ mí)
12 For the sake of blue heaven above,	上用倉浪天故	(shàng yòng cāng làng tiān gù)
And for our young children here below!	下為黃口小兒	(xià wéi huáng kǒu xiǎo ér)
14 Now you are pure and upright,	今時清廉	(jīn shí qīng lián)
And will not violate the moral code.	難犯教言	(nán fàn jiào yán)
16 You should have self-regard, don't do evil things!	君復自愛莫為非	(jūn fù zì ài mò wéi fēi)
Now you are pure and upright,	今時清廉	(jīn shí qīng lián)
18 And will not violate the moral code.	難犯教言	(nán fàn jiào yán)
You should have self-regard, don't do evil things!	君復自愛莫為非	(jūn fù zì ài mò wéi fēi)
20 "Go away!	行	(xíng)
I am already late!"	吾去為遲	(wú qù wéi chí)
22 "Be careful!"	平慎行	(píng shèn xíng)
"Wait for my return!"	望吾歸	(wàng wú guī)

[SS 21.616]<sup>19</sup>

"Song of the East Gate" is classified as a "Xianghe ge ci" (Lyrics for Accompanied Songs), which were old Han songs performed to the accompaniment of string and reed instruments. The singer held a rhythm stick during the performance of these songs. The word *xíng* in the title (Dongmen xing) designates some sort of song, and most modern scholars have translated it as "ballad," which, in European literature, is rather loosely defined and seems to indicate an oral poem of unknown authorship that narrates a story and originates in folk culture. These allegedly Han *yuefu* poems cannot be ascertained as original folk songs; they could have been literati imitations.<sup>20</sup> Several scholars have applied Milman Parry and Albert Lord's theory of oral poetry to the *Book of Poetry* and to *yuefu* poetry in an attempt to prove that these poems are nonliterate folk songs. Charles Egan, however, has argued that there is no direct evidence to prove that these poems were orally or communally

composed and transmitted. The more balanced view is thus to consider these poems as the products of the “symbiosis of oral and literate methods that has in fact long characterized balladry.”<sup>21</sup> Instead of privileging a single tradition, it is more realistic to consider oral, folk literature and literati writings as being in a constantly interactive relationship.

In the *Yuefu shiji*, there are two versions of this poem with minor variations between them. Hans Frankel has suggested that “we need not assume that one version is correct and the other corrupt; both may be equally authentic.”<sup>22</sup> This sort of variation is certainly a well-known phenomenon in the English ballad tradition.

In analyzing Han *yuefu* poetry, Cai Zong-qi discerns two major modes: the dramatic and the narrative.<sup>23</sup> “We Fought South of the Walls” is in the narrative mode, but “Song of the East Gate” switches between these two modes. First, it contains a clear storyline in which a man in poverty decides to perform an evil act in order to support his family and is being stopped by his wife. Second, the dramatic dialogue between the protagonist and his wife forms the climax of the poem. Lines 1–4, written in a pithy trisyllabic style, convey the persona’s extreme discontent and despair. In general, the style of the song is irregular and mixed, as in “We Fought South of the Walls,” and this probably indicates an earlier stage of Chinese poetry in which the style had not yet become fixed. The song opens with a description of a dismal scene. The deplorable, poverty-stricken condition the protagonist has been reduced to is unbearable. In order to survive, he must act, regardless whether his deed is criminal or not. The wife addresses her husband as an equal and demonstrates great integrity in advising him to stay honest. She first appeals to her husband by pointing out that it is simply against heaven’s way to perform evil acts, and he will not be able to face his own children. Then she expresses her willingness to share this poverty-stricken condition with him. These appeals build up the tension of the poem and advance it to the climax. The denouement is predicted, since there is no other alternative. The only thing the wife is able to offer before her husband leaves is her words of care as a wife. The overall tone of the poem is depressing. Many scholars have read it as a social text that reflects the life of commoners during the Han. The anonymous writer certainly demonstrates a high level of concern for the common people, which completely differentiates him or her from the court poets of the Han.

“There Is One I Love” is another example of a song dealing with a

nonimperial topic. It is a famous song that falls in the thematic category of romantic love. It is classified in Guo Maoqian's scheme under “**Guchui qu ci**” (Lyrics for Drum and Pipe Songs):

#### C4.6

<b>There Is One I Love</b>	有所思	(yǒu suǒ sī)
There is one I love	有所思	(yǒu suǒ sī)
2 He is south of the great sea.	乃在大海南	(nǎi zài dà hǎi nán)
Why should I send you anything!	何用問遺君	(hé yòng wèn wèi jūn)
4 As for your tortoiseshell hairpin with twin pearls,	雙珠瑇瑁簪	(shuāng zhū dài mào zān)
I braided it with jade.	用玉紹繚之	(yòng yù shào liáo zhī)
6 Yet when I heard that you have another love,	聞君有它心	(wén jūn yǒu tā xīn)
I shattered it, smashed and burned it,	拉雜摧燒之	(lā zá cuī shāo zhī)
8 Smashed and burned it.	摧燒之	(cuī shāo zhī)
Facing the wind I scattered its ashes.	當風揚其灰	(dāng fēng yáng qí huī)
10 From this day on	從今以往	(cóng jīn yǐ wǎng)
I will absolutely love you no more.	勿復相思	(wù fù xiāng sī)
12 My love for you is severed.	相思與君絕	(xiāng sī yǔ jūn jué)
Cocks crow, dogs bark,	雞鳴狗吠	(jī míng gǒu fèi)
14 My brother and sister-in-law will know.	兄嫂當知之	(xiōng sǎo dāng zhī zhī)
Alas! Alas!	妃呼豨	(fēi hū xī)
16 The autumn wind sighs, and a sparrow hawk shrieks,	秋風肅肅晨風颼	(qiū fēng sù sù chén fēng sī)
Soon in the east dawn will be breaking and it will be known.	東方須臾高知之	(dōng fāng xū yú gāo zhī zhī)

[SS 22.642]<sup>24</sup>

The poem begins with a forthright exclamation of the persona's love. Even in fifth-century China, few literati would have openly written about their wives or families, still fewer about their own love affairs. Judging from this tradition, it would be hard to imagine any literati of status having written a poem like this. Here, again, it perhaps represents both an original folk song and literati revisions. Not until line 3, which contains the word *jūn*, denoting a male in classical Chinese, does the reader realize that the poem's persona is a woman. The woman is in love with a man who is far away in the south. When she hears that he has jilted her for someone else, she is furious and decides to burn and destroy his gift to her. The fiery character depicted in this poem is rather different from the typical female image in Chinese literature. Indeed, women in the Han perhaps enjoyed more freedom than those in the Song (960–1279)



dynasty, especially in marriage. Divorce was not stigmatized, and remarriage was normal during this era. For example, the wife of Chen Ping (d. 178 B.C.E.), the strategy adviser to the first emperor of the Han, had married five times before marrying Chen—all her previous husbands had died. Overall, the female persona in the poem is a strong, energetic character who will allow no compromise in her love affair.

Line 3 has been traditionally translated as “What shall I send you?”<sup>25</sup> Accordingly, it is understood to reveal how the woman is thinking of sending a gift to her lover in the south. But the expression *he yong* in Han-time usage usually represents a rhetorical “why should” or, more plainly, “do not have to.” The hairpin with pearls seems to be more appropriately understood as a gift from the man. It makes sense that, after the breakup, the woman would wish to burn the love token. The act of destroying the gift not only demonstrates how decisive she is, but also suggests how deeply she has loved the man to have such a violent response. Line 13 is an allusion to poem no. 23 in the *Book of Poetry*, in which a young woman begs her love to keep quiet during their tryst so that the dogs will not bark. The expression “Cocks crow, dogs bark” sounds especially rustic and perhaps too vulgar and plain for a man of letters. The word *ji* (cock) first appears in a poetic context in the *Book of Poetry*, but this is the first poem in which *gou* (dog) is used. The *Book of Poetry* contains the word *quan* for “dog”; *gou* does not seem to have been a common word until the Han. Except for this *yuefu* poem, “dog” appears at the earliest in another Han poem, “Jiming” (Cocks Crow), and later in the work of the famous fourth-century poet **Tao Qian** (Tao Yuanming, 365?–427), whose poetry was not appreciated by his contemporaries because of his unpolished style. In the closure of the poem, the woman discloses her fear that her brother and sister-in-law will learn about her affair. Anne M. Birrell has speculated concerning the woman’s fear that she “believed that the attentions of [the] young official were serious” and, now pregnant, fears that the news will soon come out.<sup>26</sup> I doubt that we can determine the identity and status of the woman’s lover, as Birrell proposes. Birrell’s idea that the sparrow hawk is “a metaphor for the swift passage of time” is also baseless. The autumn season at the end of the poem, however, does seem to symbolize a dire future for the young woman, since her unsuccessful affair will become known to her brother. Since line 13 alludes to poem no. 23 in the *Book of Poetry*, in which a couple’s secret tryst is depicted, lines 13 and 14 may be read as a recollection of the lovers’ rendezvous. The last line

describes the woman's tossing and turning in her bed in anger, confusion, and fear until dawn. This is a vivid poem depicting an outspoken woman who is not afraid to express her true feelings.

In addition to the topics of social hardships and romantic love, unconventional themes began to develop in the Han *yuefu* corpus. The ***youxian*** (roaming in transcendence) theme wielded great influence on the poetry of the Six Dynasties. "Marvelous! A Ballad," categorized under "Lyrics for Accompanied Songs," is one of the earliest poems displaying a combination of what might be called *carpe diem* and *youxian* topics:

#### C4.7

##### Marvelous! A Ballad

	The days to come will be very hard,	善哉行	(shàn zāi xíng)
2	Our mouth will be dry and lips parched.	來日大難	(lái rì dà nán)
	Today we enjoy each other's company,	口燥唇乾	(kǒu zào chún gān)
4	Let's cheer up and be merry.	今日相樂	(jīn rì xiāng lè)
	I travel through famous mountains,	皆當喜歡	(jiē dāng xǐ huān)
6	Mushrooms wigwag in the wind.	經歷名山	(jīng lì míng shān)
	The immortal Prince Qiao	芝草翻翻	(zhī cǎo fān fān)
8	Offers me a pill of medicine.	仙人王喬	(xiān rén wáng qiáo)
	I pity my sleeves are so short,	奉藥一丸	(fèng yào yì wán)
10	When I try to tuck my hands in, I feel cold.	自惜袖短	(zì xī xiù duǎn)
	I'm ashamed that there are none like Ling Zhe,	內手知寒	(nà shǒu zhī hán)
12	Who repaid Zhao Xuan.	慚無靈輒	(cán wú líng zhé)
	The moon sinks, the Triaster slants.	以報趙宣	(yǐ bào zhào xuān)
14	The Northern Dipper lies across the sky.	月沒參橫	(yuè mò shēn héng)
	Relatives and friends walk into my house,	北斗闌干	(běi dòu lán gān)
16	Though hungry, they have not enough food.	親交在門	(qīn jiāo zài mén)
	Our happy days are few,	饑不及餐	(jī bù jí cān)
18	Yet miserable days are many.	歡日尚少	(huān rì shàng shǎo)
	How can I forget my melancholy?	戚日苦多	(qī rì kǔ duō)
20	I will play my zither, have wine, and sing a song.	何以忘憂	(hé yǐ wàng yōu)
	The eight lords under Prince Huainan,	彈箏酒歌	(tán zhēng jiǔ gē)
22	Their Way is pithy, not convoluted.	淮南八公	(huái nán bā gōng)
	Let me drive a carriage of six dragons to	要道不煩	(yào dào bù fán)
24	Roam and play in the clouds.	參駕六龍	(cān jià liù lóng)
		遊戲雲端	(yóu xì yún duān)

The poem is composed in regular tetrasyllabic lines, a pattern that remained popular until the Later Han. The beginning of the poem laments the hardships of life, typical in works that contain the *carpe diem* poetic theme. The persona exhorts his audience to enjoy one another's company as much as they can, since prospects for the future are so uncertain. But his attitude is not hedonistic because pleasure is not regarded as the purpose of his life. Rather, he is an escapist seeking distraction from harsh reality, and the cult of immortality provides a channel for him to do so. From the text, we are unable to know if the persona is a true Daoist absorbed in self-cultivation, but the worldly concerns about his own poverty and hunger have detached him from such an image. The protagonist claims that he travels through famous mountains and encounters Prince Qiao, the all-time favorite immortal in the tradition, who offers him a pill. Only when he accepts it does he suddenly realize that he is cold. This at once informs the reader of the coldness of the immortal realm and brings back to the reader's mind a sense of reality. Although the receiver of such a wonderful gift from the immortal, the persona feels ashamed that he cannot repay him. Ling Zhe was a historical figure of the seventh century B.C.E. who was rescued from starvation by Zhao Dun (Zhao Xuan). He repaid Zhao Dun by saving him from an assassination attempt. When the persona returns to the human realm, he has to face again his dire situation. Here, again, we see an abrupt transition. Under the moonlit sky, all he sees are his poor relatives and friends, for whom he cannot even provide enough food. But this man's solution to his poverty is drastically different from that in the previously discussed "Song of the East Gate." Instead of resorting to crime, he chooses first wine and music and then an escape into a world of transcendence. This is typical of what many literati did later in the Six Dynasties, during which wine and music were common channels for forgetting worries. Spiritually, many literati often reverted to Daoist philosophy when their careers suffered. The "eight lords" of the poem were the honored guests invited by **Liu An** (179–122 B.C.E.), king of Huainan, to his kingdom. Liu was a Han prince famous for his search for immortality and his love of literature and philosophy. Legend has it that he and his guests withdrew from the world and became immortals. In this poem, the *youxian* theme is concerned not so much with philosophy as with literary imagination. The persona obtains a sense of delight by imagining that he roams in the fantastic world of flying immortals. Through his interstellar journey, he is able to break through the limitations



of time and space and acquire a sense of relief and delight. Hence the poem ends in a playful wandering in the sky.

I have discussed several different poetic themes in the Han *yuefu* corpus, but no general essay on *yuefu* poetry can exclude the poem “Mulberry Along the Lane,” the most anthologized and the best-known *yuefu* poem among Chinese readers.<sup>28</sup> Modern scholars have placed great emphasis on the contrast between folk songs and literary *yuefu*, with stress on the former, and this poem is a superb example of coexisting features of folk and literati techniques. In Guo Maoqian’s classification, it is grouped among the “Da qu” (Grand Songs) in the “Lyrics for Accompanied Songs.”

#### **C4.8**

### Mulberry Along the Lane

- The sun rises from the southeast corner,  
2 Shines on our Qin clan house.  
The Qin clan has a pretty girl,  
4 She calls herself Luofu.  
Luofu delights in raising silkworms and picking  
mulberry leaves.  
6 She picks mulberry leaves at the southern corner of the  
wall,  
Blue silk strands form her basket ties,  
8 A cassia twig serves as its handle.  
On her head is a falling chignon;  
10 On her ears are bright moon pearls.  
Of golden silk is her skirt,  
12 Of purple silk is her jacket.  
When passersby see Luofu  
14 They put down their loads, stroking their beards.  
When young men see Luofu,  
16 They remove their caps and fiddle with their head cloths.  
Plowmen forget their plows;  
18 Hoers forget their hoes.  
When they return, they complain about each other —  
20 It's all because of looking at Luofu.  
The grand warden comes from the south,  
22 His five horses stop, pacing up and down.  
The grand warden sends forth an officer,  
24 To ask from what house is this pretty girl.  
“The Qin clan has a pretty girl,  
26 She calls herself Luofu.”  
“What is Luofu's age?”  
28 “Not quite twenty yet.  
A little more than fifteen.”  
30 The grand warden asks Luofu,  
“Would you like to ride with me?”  
32 Luofu steps forward and answers,  
“How stupid is the grand warden!  
34 The grand warden has his own wife,  
And Luofu has her own husband.  
36 In the east, of a thousand-plus horsemen,  
It is my husband who takes the lead.  
38 How can one recognize my husband?

- 陌上桑 (mò shàng sāng)  
日出東南隅 (rì chū dōng nán yú)  
照我秦氏樓 (zhào wǒ qín shì lóu)  
秦氏有好女 (qín shì yǒu hǎo nǚ)  
自名為羅敷 (zì míng wéi luó fū)  
羅敷喜蠶桑 (luó fū xǐ cán sāng)  
採桑城南隅 (cǎi sāng chéng nán yú)  
青絲為籠係 (qīng sī wéi lóng xì)  
桂枝為籠鉤 (guì zhī wéi lóng gōu)  
頭上倭墮髻 (tóu shàng wǒ duò jì)  
耳中明月珠 (ěr zhōng míng yuè zhū)  
綰綺為下裙 (wǎn qǐ wéi xià qún)  
紫綺為上襦 (zǐ qǐ wéi shàng rú)  
行者見羅敷 (xíng zhě jiàn luó fū)  
下擔捋鬚鬚 (xià dàn lǚ zī xū)  
少年見羅敷 (shào nián jiàn luó fū)  
脫帽著幘頭 (tuō mào zhuó shāo tóu)  
耕者忘其犁 (gēng zhě wàng qí lí)  
鋤者忘其鋤 (chú zhě wàng qí chú)  
來歸相怒怨 (lái guī xiāng nù yuàn)  
但坐觀羅敷 (dàn zuò guān luó fū)  
使君從南來 (shǐ jūn cóng nán lái)  
五馬立踟躕 (wǔ mǎ lì chí chú)  
使君遣吏往 (shǐ jūn qiǎn lì wǎng)  
問此誰家姝 (wèn cǐ shuí jiā shū)  
秦氏有好女 (qín shì yǒu hǎo nǚ)  
自名為羅敷 (zì míng wéi luó fū)  
羅敷年幾何 (luó fū nián jǐ hé)  
二十尚不足 (èr shí shàng bù zú)  
十五頗有餘 (shí wǔ pō yǒu yú)  
使君謝羅敷 (shǐ jūn xiè luó fū)  
寧可共載不 (níng kě gòng zài fǒu)  
羅敷前致詞 (luó fū qián zhì cí)  
使君一何愚 (shǐ jūn yì hé yú)  
使君自有婦 (shǐ jūn zì yǒu fù)  
羅敷自有夫 (luó fū zì yǒu fū)  
東方千餘騎 (dōng fāng qiān yú jì)  
夫婿居上頭 (fū xù jū shàng tóu)  
何用識夫婿 (hé yòng shì fū xù)

	On a white steed followed by a black colt.	白馬從驪駒	(bǎi mǎ cóng lí jū)
40	Blue silk strands are tied to the horse's tail,	青絲繫馬尾	(qīng sī xì mǎ wěi)
	Yellow gold halters the horse's head.	黃金絡馬頭	(huáng jīn luò mǎ tóu)
42	On his waist is a windlass-style sword;	腰中鹿盧劍	(yāo zhōng lù lú jiàn)
	It is worth millions of cash!	可直千萬餘	(kě zhí qiān wàn yú)
44	At fifteen he was a petty bureau clerk.	十五府小史	(shí wǔ fǔ xiǎo shǐ)
	At twenty he was a court grandee.	二十朝大夫	(èr shí cháo dài fū)
46	At thirty he was a palace gentleman.	三十侍中郎	(sān shí shì zhōng láng)
	At forty he dominates an entire city.	四十專城居	(sì shí zhuān chéng jū)
48	He is man of a pure white skin,	為人潔白皙	(wéi rén jié bái xī)
	Thin sideburns and a slight beard.	鬢鬢頗有須	(lián lián pǒ yǒu xū)
50	Elegantly and gracefully he paces in his bureau,	盈盈公府步	(yíng yíng gōng fǔ bù)
	Slowly he walks within his residence.	冉冉府中趨	(rán rán fǔ zhōng qū)
52	A thousand men sit there,	坐中數千人	(zuò zhōng shù qiān rén)
	All say my husband is exceptional."	皆言夫婿殊	(jiē yán fū xù shū)

[SS 21.617]

First of all, from the consistent use of the pentasyllabic lines, the poem has been roughly dated to the Later Han, when this style became mature, despite the absence of internal evidence to support this view. Literary style can be deceiving and cannot serve as absolute evidence in dating a literary work. Basically, this song tells of a resourceful woman named Luofu who successfully rebuts the advances of a flirting governor. Traditionally this poem has been interpreted as a representation of social injustice, depicting as it does an official harassing a peasant girl. Recently, however, scholars have begun to deviate from this line of interpretation. Analyzing its form from a comparative perspective, Hans Frankel has pointed out that there is “a type of medieval European *pastourelle* where a shepherdess thwarts a philandering gentleman.”<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, “Mulberry Along the Lane” has no exact European counterparts. However tempting it might be for scholars to compare similar types of literature from different cultures, such comparisons are in danger of disregarding real cultural differences. Frankel also lists three stylistic features of the poem that, in his view, demonstrate its oral nature: formulaic language, various types of repetition, and exaggeration.<sup>30</sup> Lines 3 and 4 (and 25–26) are considered to be instances of formulaic language, since they are similar to a passage in the famous *yuefu* poem “Kongque dongnan fei” (Southeast Fly the Peacocks). This view probably needs to be modified because it is difficult to ascertain cases of formulaic language with the extremely short length

of Chinese poetry.<sup>31</sup> Repetition, which is often interpreted as an aide-mémoire and a device to advance the action, is prevalent and obvious in this poem. Exaggeration (lines 38–48, where the young woman boasts of her husband) as evidence of the poem’s oral nature is the weakest, since many kinds of poetry may contain such a device. Although these features are not sufficient to prove that this work is an orally composed poem, they do remain its stylistic characteristics and serve as evidence of its possible borrowing from the folk tradition. Overall, Frankel maintains that this poem is an oral folk song elaborated “by an upper-class poet for an aristocratic audience.”<sup>32</sup> Nonetheless, it is open to different interpretations since there is no direct evidence to definitively categorize it.

Zong-qi Cai posits five major characteristics in analyzing this poem: situational thinking, ahistorical presentation, abrupt transitions, composite structure, and repetitions.<sup>33</sup> The poem’s composite structure is a particularly important observation. In explaining the composite structure of a folk *yuefu*, Cai points out that it “involves the participation of several performers who each bring to the work a different point of view, a different set of oral formulas or expressions, and probably a different style of performance as well.”<sup>34</sup> Orally composed or not, the performative nature of this poem is clear and serves as a useful interpretative tool. Each section is like a mini-drama with an awareness of an audience.

Traditional interpretations of this poem, especially those from mainland China, usually view it as a story of a brave peasant girl resisting the advances of a lustful governor. This reading, which stresses class struggle and oppression, was typical of mainland scholarship before the 1990s. With the introduction of Western anthropological and literary theories, however, many scholars no longer support it. The tendency in more recent scholarship has been to consider it as a song of flirtation without serious moral issues. Cai, for example, has suggested that it is a work imitating the courtship rite.

This intriguing poem continues to attract different interpretations. The theme of male flirtation is not unusual in the Chinese literary tradition. For example, “Dengtuzi haose fu” (*Fu* on Master Dengtu, the Lecher) contains a paragraph in which a man politely presents poetry to a young lady to express his love. Qiu Hu, in the *Lienü zhuan* (*Biographies of Various Ladies*), represents another example. As Qiu Hu is returning home, he sees along the road a woman collecting mulberry leaves. He attempts to seduce her with gold but is refused. When his wife discovers the true identity of the stranger, in her shame, she drowns herself in a

river. There is another story in that collection about collecting mulberry leaves, but without the theme of flirtation. In this story, the king of Qi decides to marry a woman with a big goiter because she is the only one who does not look at him and concentrates only on collecting mulberry leaves.<sup>35</sup> From these and similar stories, we know that collecting mulberry leaves for silkworms was an important agricultural activity in ancient China portrayed in several literary texts and genres. The examples we find are all, in one way or another, related to love or the relationship between a man and a woman. Even though we have no direct evidence in this poem relevant to the courtship theory, there is little doubt that the mulberry as an image of love is deeply rooted in Chinese civilization. For example, poem no. 48 in the *Book of Poetry* talks about a love tryst in the mulberry grounds in the springtime.

Another significant point is Luofu's beautiful clothes and precious jewelry, which do not suggest a peasant girl, but a woman of some social status. But why, it might be asked, would such a lady collect mulberry leaves, unless the poet is presenting such a properly dressed woman in order to appeal to an aristocratic audience. Another possible explanation is that the image of wealth and luxury expresses the hidden wishes of the common people and is an example of the device of "boastful inventiveness" common in European ballads.<sup>36</sup>

The grand warden does not appear as an oppressive figure, and that has contributed to the weakening support of the socialist theory of class struggle. The conversation between Luofu and the governor is amusing and relaxed. Luofu's summary of her husband's achievements is another example of boastful inventiveness. At Luofu's refusal, the poem stops, as do the governor's advances. Considering it a culmination of the boastful device, several scholars have suggested that, at the critical moment, Luofu invents a husband who outranks the governor.<sup>37</sup> It is also possible that the poem, as received, is incomplete. In any case, these different interpretations are perhaps not mutually exclusive but mutually illuminating. The original poem perhaps intended to reflect social ills, but different themes could have arisen through adaptation and performance. Some readers may still see its commentary on the social reality despite its adaptations for performance and entertainment. Due to our insufficient knowledge of its textual revisions, performative context, and intended audience, all interpretations are tentative and subject to question.



In this chapter, we have considered two entirely separate sets of poems. The first, the religious hymns written during the Western Han and performed at ceremonial occasions, have had little impact on Chinese literature. The second group, however, dealing with ordinary people's daily life, became the fountainhead of medieval Chinese poetry. Both types were generally composed by anonymous authors and were placed under the loose category of *yuefu* verse by later compilers. The term *yuefu* as a generic label did not appear until the sixth century, however, and so scholars have challenged the validity of this word as a generic label.<sup>38</sup> Despite the lingering controversy around such questions as the origins of the Music Bureau its official functions, and authenticity, the Han Music Bureau corpus continues to play a critical role in Chinese literary history.

Jui-lung Su

#### NOTES

1. For a detailed discussion of these issues, see Anne M. Birrell, "Mythmaking and *Yüeh-fu*: Popular Songs and Ballads of Early Imperial China," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 109, no. 2 (1989): 223–235.
2. Ban Gu, *Han shu (History of the Han Dynasty)* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 22.1071–1074.
3. Shen Yue, comp., *Song shu (History of the Liu Song Dynasty)* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1965), 19.550; Charles Egan, "Reconsidering the Role of Folk Songs in Pre-T'ang *Yüeh-fu* Development," *T'oung Pao* 86, nos. 1–3 (2000): 77.
4. Egan, "Reconsidering the Role of Folk Songs," 78–99; Zhang Yongxin, *Han Yuefu yanjiu (A Study of Han Music Bureau Poetry)* (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1992), 58–63.
5. Ban Gu, *Han shu* 30.1754–1755.
6. Ban Gu, *Han shu* 22.1043.
7. Wei Zheng (580–643), ed., *Sui shu (History of the Sui Dynasty)*, 75.1714; Li Yanshou (seventh century), ed., *Beishi (History of the Northern Dynasties)*, 82.2757.
8. Wang Xianqian, *Han shu buzhu (Complementary Annotations to the "History of the Han Dynasty")* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 1:482.
9. The *Shiji (Records of the Grand Scribe)* records that Emperor Wu began to present sacrifices to the Grand Unity, the highest deity in Han times, in 124 B.C.E. (Xiao Tong, comp., *Wen xuan, or Selections of Refined Literature*, vol. 1, *Rhapsodies on Metropolises and Capitals*, trans. David R. Knechtges [Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982], 276).
10. For another translation and comments, see Anne M. Birrell, *Popular Songs and Ballads of Han China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1993), 38–39.
11. Ban Gu, *Han shu* 22.1057.
12. For an interpretation of *ao* or *yun*, see David R. Knechtges, "A New Study of Han *Yüeh-Fu*," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 110, no. 2 (1990): 312.
13. Xiao Tong, *Wen xuan*, 1:214.
14. Sima Qian, *Shiji* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1963), 12.471.
15. Joseph R. Allen, *In the Voice of Others: Chinese Music Bureau Poetry* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1996), 39–40.
16. Knechtges, "New Study of Han *Yüeh-Fu*," 310–311.



17. For other translations, see Arthur Waley, trans., *Chinese Poems: Selected from "170 Chinese Poems," "More Translations from the Chinese," "The Temple" and "The Book of Songs"* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1946), 52, and Wu-chi Liu and Irving Yucheng Lo, eds., *Sunflower Splendor: Three Thousand Years of Chinese Poetry* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975), 35–36.
18. For a list of characteristics of the folk *yuefu*, see Zong-qi Cai, *The Matrix of Lyric Transformation: Poetic Modes and Self-Presentation in Early Chinese Pentasyllabic Poetry* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1996), 29.
19. For another translation, see Birrell, *Popular Songs and Ballads*, 134.
20. Egan has presented systematic and strong arguments about these issues in "Reconsidering the Role of Folk Songs," 47–99, and "Were *Yüeh-fu* Ever Folk Songs? Reconsidering the Relevance of Oral Theory and Balladry Analogies," *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 22 (2000): 31–66.
21. Egan, "Were *Yüeh-fu* Ever Folk Songs?" 57.
22. See Hans Frankel's classic study "*Yüeh-fu* Poetry," in *Studies in Chinese Literary Genres*, ed. Cyril Birch (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 81.
23. Cai, *Matrix of Lyric Transformation*, 21–59.
24. For other translations, see Waley, *Chinese Poems*, 54, and Birrell, *Popular Songs and Ballads*, 147–148.
25. Birrell, *Popular Songs and Ballads*, 147.
26. Birrell, *Popular Songs and Ballads*, 148.
27. For another translation, see Birrell, *Popular Songs and Ballads*, 80–82.
28. For other translations, see Waley, *Chinese Poems*, 65–67; Liu and Lo, *Sunflower Splendor*, 34–35; and Birrell, *Popular Songs and Ballads*, 169–173.
29. Frankel, "*Yüeh-fu* Poetry," 81.
30. Hans Frankel, "Some Characteristics of Oral Narrative Poetry in China," in *Études d'histoire et de littérature chinoises offertes au Professeur Jaroslav Průšek*, ed. Yves Hervouet (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1976), 97–106.
31. Egan, "Were *Yüeh-fu* Ever Folk Songs?" 47.
32. Frankel, "Some Characteristics of Oral Narrative Poetry," 105.
33. Cai, *Matrix of Lyric Transformation*, 33–48.
34. Cai, *Matrix of Lyric Transformation*, 38.
35. Zhang Qi, "Han *yuefu* 'Moshang sang' xintan" (A New Study of the Han Music Bureau Poem "Mulberry Along the Lane"), *Lanzhou xueyuan xuebao* 3 (1995): 94–95.
36. Frankel, "Some Characteristics of Oral Narrative Poetry," 104–105.
37. Frankel, "Some Characteristics of Oral Narrative Poetry," 105.
38. Birrell, "Mythmaking and *Yüeh-fu*," 26–27.

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## Pentasyllabic *Shi* Poetry

### The “Nineteen Old Poems”

The “Nineteen Old Poems” are the earliest known coherent group of pentasyllabic poems, first collected in the *Wen xuan* (*Anthology of Refined Literature*), compiled by **Xiao Tong** (501–531), the crown prince of Liang. The authorship and dating of these nineteen poems have long been a subject of debate. Eight of the poems have been attributed to the Former Han poet Mei Sheng (d. ca. 140 B.C.E.) and at least one to the Later Han poet Fu Yi (d. ca. 90) by some premodern scholars. However, most modern scholars have discredited these attributions and believe that the poems were written toward the end of the Later Han by anonymous literati living in the capital city of Luoyang. Another perplexing issue about this collection is its relation to the Han *yuefu* ([chap. 4](#)). Some of the poems have been collected in *yuefu* anthologies, and one poem contains segments that were still performed as late as Jin times. Despite the lingering presence of some *yuefu* motifs, however, the waning, if not complete disappearance, of oral performance is clearly evident.

The “Nineteen Old Poems” introduces new themes and transforms old ones in ways that reflect the rising self-consciousness of the literati. Whether speaking directly or through a female persona, the anonymous poets consistently brooded over their inner experience and searched for the meaning of their lives on an abstract philosophical level unseen in earlier *shi* poetry. The new syntactic and structural features of this collection also yield ample internal evidence of self-reflective literati writing instead of singers performing or others orally communicating the poems. In view of such profound thematic and formal changes, modern critics generally agree that this collection marks an important transition

from a performative to a self-reflective tradition in the evolution of pentasyllabic *shi* poetry. For this reason, it is often hailed as a fountainhead of Chinese lyricism and given a prominent place in the history of Chinese poetry.



To prepare for our discussion of pentasyllabic poetry in this and the next three chapters, we should look first at its metrics. As illustrated in the table, pentasyllabic poetry has five major rules:

1. There are five characters per line.
2. The number of lines in a poem is variable.
3. Lines are usually organized into couplets.
4. Rhyme usually occurs at every other line—in other words, at the end of the closing line of each couplet (as indicated by the triangular rhyme marker ▲).
5. The first two characters make up a disyllabic segment (usually a disyllabic compound), and the remaining three a trisyllabic segment (usually a disyllabic compound plus a monosyllabic word).

Disyllabic segment		Trisyllabic segment				
ride	chariot	upper°	eastern	gate	驅車上東門	(qū chē shàng dōng mén)
distant	behold	wall	north°	grave	遙望郭北墓	(yáo wàng guō běi mù) ▲
white	poplar	how°	bleak	bleak	白楊何蕭蕭	(bái yáng hé xiāo xiāo)
pine	cypress	line°	broad	road	松柏夾廣路	(sōng bó jiā guǎng lù) ▲

I ride my carriage to the Upper East Gate,  
Gazing at the graves north of the wall.  
White poplars, how bleak they are in the wind!  
Pine and cypress flank the broad paths.

[Poem 13, lines 1–4; WX 29.1348]

The first and second rules set forth the spatial configuration of a pentasyllabic poem; the third and fourth, the rhyming pattern; and the fifth, the semantic rhythm. Of these five rules, the last represents an important metrical innovation. Before the rise of pentasyllabic poetry, disyllabic beat was the most important metrical unit in Chinese poetry. In the ***Shijing*** (*The Book of Poetry*), for instance, tetrasyllabic lines, made

up of two disyllabic segments, were used with a much higher frequency than any other poetic lines ([chap. 1](#)). While tetrasyllabic poetry has an even 2 + 2 beat, pentasyllabic poetry, with the addition of one monosyllabic word, produces a much more dynamic rhythm. In a pentasyllabic line, a semantic pause, generally treated as an unmarked caesura, falls between the second and third characters and divides the line into two distinctive units (as indicated by the column division). This creates a distinctive 2 + 3 semantic rhythm.

This semantic rhythm can be further divided because there is a secondary caesura (as indicated by °) between the monosyllabic word and the disyllabic compound in the final unit. Depending on whether the secondary caesura occurs after the third or the fourth character, a 2 + 3 semantic rhythm can be broken down into either a 2 + (2 + 1) rhythm (as in lines 1 and 2) or a 2 + (1 + 2) rhythm (as in lines 3 and 4). In short, the imbalance of the disyllabic and trisyllabic units, together with the shifting of the secondary caesura, creates a varied, fluid rhythm. Not only is this new *shi* rhythm uniformly employed in all subsequent pentasyllabic poetry ([chaps. 6–8, 10](#), and [11](#)), but it also serves as the core rhythm in heptasyllabic poetry ([chaps. 9](#) and [10](#)).

## THEME: AGING AND HUMAN TRANSIENCE

What distinguishes the “Nineteen Old Poems” from earlier *shi* poetry is their central theme. Commenting on this distinguishing trait, **Qian Qianyi** (1582–1664) wrote, “‘Man’s life is between heaven and earth, / Rushing through like a traveler with a long way to go.’ These poetic lines convey a meaning not to be found in either the *Three Hundred Poems* [*Book of Poetry*] or the *Lyrics of Chu*.”<sup>1</sup> In the “Nineteen Old Poems,” this all-important theme is explored from the contrasting perspectives of the abandoned woman and the wandering man.

Poems 1, 2, 8, 9, 17, 18, and 19 are poems of the abandoned woman. Here, abandoned women lament the misery of separation and dwell on the sorrow of aging. These two motifs figure prominently in poem 1:

### C5.1

#### No. 1, On and On, Again On and On [You Go]

	On and on, again on and on [you go].	行行重行行	(xíng xíng chóng xíng xíng)
2	I cannot but live apart from you.	與君生別離	(yǔ jūn shēng bié lí)
	The distance has grown ten thousand <i>li</i> and more,	相去萬餘里	(xiāng qù wàn yú lǐ)
4	We are now at opposite ends of the sky.	各在天一涯	(gè zài tiān yì yá)
	The road is rugged and long,	道路阻且長	(dào lù zǔ qiě cháng)
6	How can I know when we shall meet again?	會面安可知	(huì miàn ān kě zhī)
	The Tartar horse leans into the north wind,	胡馬依北風	(hú mǎ yī běi fēng)
8	The Yue bird nests among southern branches.	越鳥巢南枝	(yuè niǎo cháo nán zhī)
	Day by day our parting seems more remote,	相去日已遠	(xiāng qù rì yǐ yuǎn)
10	Day by day robe and belt grow looser.	衣帶日已緩	(yī dài rì yǐ huǎn)
	Drifting clouds hide the white sun,	浮雲蔽白日	(fú yún bì bái rì)
12	The wanderer does not care to return.	遊子不顧反	(yóu zǐ bú gù fǎn)
	Thinking of you makes one old,	思君令人老	(sī jūn lìng rén lǎo)
14	Years and months are suddenly gone.	歲月忽已晚	(suì yuè hū yǐ wǎn)
	Forget all this—I will say no more about it,	棄捐勿復道	(qì juān wù fù dào)
16	But try my utmost to eat my meals.	努力加餐飯	(nǚ lì jiā cān fàn)

[WX 29.1343]

This poem begins with a poignant moment of reflection by an abandoned woman. Instead of recounting the story of her husband's departure, she merely utters: "On and on, again on and on [you go]." With a doubling of the reduplicative binome "on and on" (*xíng xíng*), she conveys how painful it was to watch her husband disappear down the long road and picture him moving from place to place on his outbound journey. Then, in lines 3 and 4, she tells us that the journey's completion did not end her misery but actually led to another kind of waiting—the wait for him to return. That proves even more painful than enduring his outbound trip, since she cannot know when (if ever) he will return. So she sighs, "The road is rugged and long, / How can I know when we shall meet again?" Apparently what affects her the most is not so much her husband's physical separation as her painful awareness of the slow passage of time, measured by her endless yearning for his return.

In the second half of the poem the speaker begins to reflect on time's passage by measuring it against her own lifespan. Up to line 10, her sense of time is measured by unhappy events. Time seems to drag because she yearns for an end to the separation. But when she notices how she has wasted away in pining, she awakens to a different kind of time, one that is measured against her own biological life. To anyone who treasures life, any passage of time is too swift and any sign of aging too

saddening. Seeing time's passage in this new light, the wife breaks into this lament: "Thinking of you makes one old, / Years and months are suddenly gone." This dramatic, ironic shift in her perception of time marks the transformation of her sorrow at separation into melancholy over the hastened process of aging.

If we accept the consensus view that the "Nineteen Old Poems" were written by a group of disenchanted literati men living in the capital city of Luoyang, we can say that the author of this poem is adopting the persona of an abandoned woman as a means of subtly expressing his grievances. In Chinese poetry, a woman abandoned by her husband is customarily compared with a scholar-official out of favor with his ruler or patron (thematic table of contents 2.3). Speaking in the voice of a frail, abandoned woman, the poet probably intends to express his grief over abandonment by his patron, or his forlorn pledge of loyalty in the hope of regaining his patron's trust and favor. By foregrounding the issue of aging, he also turns his political woes into a deeper pain over life's brevity.

Poems 3, 4, 6, 7, 11, 13, 14, and 15 are poems of the wandering man. Appearing as weary wanderers, the speakers seem less fictional than the abandoned woman seen earlier. This is partly because of the disappearance of the gender difference between speaker and poet and partly because of the presence of some genuine reflections about the conditions of the poets' actual world. In poem 3, for instance, we find explicit references to the capital city and its major landmarks:

## **C5.2**

### **No. 3, Green, Green Grows the Cypress on the Hilltop**

	Green, green grows the cypress on the hilltop,	青青陵上栢	(qīng qīng líng shàng bó)
2	Heap upon heap stand stones in mountain streams.	磊磊碣中石	(lěi lěi jiàn zhōng shí)
	Between heaven and earth is man's life,	人生天地間	(rén shēng tiān dì jiān)
4	Rushing like a traveler with a long way to go.	忽如遠行客	(hū rú yuǎn xíng kè)
	Let this dipper of wine be our entertainment;	斗酒相娛樂	(dǒu jiǔ xiāng yú lè)
6	Little as it is, we do not think little of it.	聊厚不爲薄	(liáo hòu bù wéi bó)
	I drive my carriage, whipping my slow horses	驅車策駑馬	(qū chē cè nú mǎ)
8	To roam and seek pleasure in Wan and Luo.	遊戲宛與洛	(yóu xì wǎn yǔ luò)
	Here in Luoyang, what a hustle and bustle!	洛中何鬱鬱	(luò zhōng hé yù yù)
10	Those who wear caps and belts chase one another.	冠帶自相索	(guān dài zì xiāng suǒ)
	Long thoroughfares flanked with narrow alleys,	長衢羅夾巷	(cháng qú luó jiā xiàng)
12	Mansions of princes and nobles arranged in ranks.	王侯多第宅	(wáng hóu duō dì zhái)
	The two palaces look at each other from afar,	兩宮遙相望	(liǎng gōng yáo xiāng wàng)
14	Paired towers rise over a hundred feet and more.	雙闕百餘尺	(shuāng quē bǎi yú chǐ)
	Let me feast to my heart's content,	極宴娛心意	(jí yàn yú xīn yì)
16	Why should I let worries oppress my heart.	戚戚何所迫	(qī qī hé suǒ pò)

[WX 29.1344]

“Luo” and “Wan” in line 8 denote, respectively, the capital city of Luoyang and a smaller city to the south of Luoyang; lines 9–14 are vivid descriptions of the royal palaces and mansions. However, even though we encounter the speaker in this realistic locale, we still find it difficult to identify him with the poet. His pursuit of worldly pleasure, his existential anxiety, and his solutions to emotional crises are described in very general terms. There is little solid evidence of the life of a unique individual. The persona of the wandering man seems to reveal merely the collective identity of a disenchanting literati group.

In the poems of the wandering man, we usually encounter three distinct motifs: (1) a lonely wanderer contemplating a desolate scene, either a wintry landscape or a graveyard; (2) a vehement lamentation over human transience; and (3) a sustained reflection on various ways of coping with human transience. Poem 13, for instance, features these three motifs:

### C5.3

#### No. 13, I Ride My Carriage to the Upper East Gate

I ride my carriage to the Upper East Gate,	驅車上東門	(qū chē shàng dōng mén)
2 Gazing at the graves north of the wall.	遙望郭北墓	(yáo wàng guō běi mù)
White poplars, how bleak they are in the wind!	白楊何蕭蕭	(bái yáng hé xiāo xiāo)
4 Pine and cypress flank the broad paths.	松柏夾廣路	(sōng bǎi jiā guǎng lù)
Underneath them, the dead from long ago,	下有陳死人	(xià yǒu chén sǐ rén)
6 Dark, dark is their long night.	杳杳即長暮	(yǎo yǎo jí cháng mù)
Lost in sleep beneath the Yellow Springs,	潛寐黃泉下	(qián mèi huáng quán xià)
8 Come a thousand years, they will not awaken.	千載永不寤	(qiān zǎi yǒng bú wù)
Seasons of growth and decay march on and on,	浩浩陰陽移	(hào hào yīn yáng yí)
10 The years allotted to man are like morning dew.	年命如朝露	(nián mìng rú zhāo lù)
Man's life is as transient as a sojourn,	人生忽如寄	(rén shēng hū rú jì)
12 His frame is not as firm as metal or stone.	壽無金石固	(shòu wú jīn shí gù)
Ten thousand years have gone by,	萬歲更相送	(wàn suì gēng xiāng sòng)
14 No sages or worthies can cross the flow of time.	聖賢莫能度	(shèng xián mò néng dù)
Some take drugs and hope to become immortals,	服食求神仙	(fú shí qiú shén xiān)
16 Many of them only end their life with poison.	多為藥所誤	(duō wéi yào suǒ wù)
Far better to drink fine wine	不如飲美酒	(bù rú yǐn měi jiǔ)
18 And wear clothes made of choice white silk.	被服紬與素	(pī fú wán yǔ sù)

[WX 29.1348]

The speaker first tells us that he catches a glimpse of the graveyard on Mount Mang when his carriage passes through the northern gate of Luoyang. What meets his eyes are weeping poplar trees, pine, and cypress—all associated with the dead because they were often planted to mark grave sites. The sight of these trees evokes a dark mood of melancholy, leading him to conjure up an even more dismal world below. Underneath, there is no life, only a mass of dead bodies from long ago; no light, just an everlasting darkness; and no awakening, but an eternal sleep. After describing the imagined scene of an underworld, the speaker breaks into a lament about the evanescence of human existence: “Man’s life is as transient as a sojourn, / His frame is not as firm as metal or stone.” In the poems of the wandering man, such depressing statements abound:

Between heaven and earth is man's life,	人生天地間	(rén shēng tiān dì jiān)
Rushing like a traveler with a long way	忽如遠行客	(hū rú yuǎn xíng kè)
to go.		

[Poem 3, lines 3–4; WX 29.1344]

Man's life does not reach a hundred years,  
Yet his heart is filled with the worries of a  
thousand years.

生年不滿百 (shēng nián bù mǎn bǎi)  
常懷千歲憂 (cháng huái qiān suì yōu)

[Poem 15, lines 1–2; WX 29.1349]

Such philosophizing about human transience is not found in pre-Han poems. Only in historical or philosophical writings before the Han do we come across statements on the brevity of human life. But in the “Nineteen Old Poems,” such statements occur with a frequency probably unrivaled by any other poetic collection and thus constitute a defining feature of the collection.

In the last part of poem 13, the speaker turns to a search for a solution to human transience. He first dismisses the Confucian pursuit of *ming* (a name) as useless, since even sages and all others of great name must die just as common people do. Next he ridicules the popular Daoist practice of taking longevity drugs, declaring that those taking such drugs will only shorten, if not end, their own lives. Finally, he settles on the idea of carpe diem as the only sensible thing to do in this world. So he exhorts himself and all others to seek the pleasure of fine wine and clothes. This advocacy of carpe diem, too, abounds in the “Nineteen Old Poems”:

Let this dipper of wine be our entertainment;  
Little as it is, we do not think little of it.

斗酒相娛樂 (dǒu jiǔ xiāng yú lè)  
聊厚不爲薄 (liáo hòu bù wéi bó)

[Poem 3, lines 5–6; WX 29.1344]

The day is short and the night too long to bear  
Why not take a candle and go out wandering?  
Seek out pleasure while there's time,  
How can we wait for next year?  
Fools are those who grudge all expenses,  
Only to be laughed at by later generations.

晝短苦夜長 (zhòu duǎn kǔ yè cháng)  
何不秉燭遊 (hé bù bǐng zhú yóu)  
爲樂當及時 (wéi lè dāng jí shí)  
何能待來茲 (hé néng dài lái zī)  
愚者愛惜費 (yū zhě ài xī fèi)  
但爲後世嗤 (dàn wéi hòu shì chī)

[Poem 15, lines 3–8; WX 29.1349]

This Chinese version of carpe diem seems to be a poetic rendering of the hedonist ideas attributed to Yang Zhu (fl. third century B.C.E.):

The myriad creatures are different in life but the same in death. In life



they may be worthy or stupid, honorable or humble. This is where they differ. In death they all stink, rot, disintegrate, and disappear. This is where they are the same.... The man of virtue and the sage die; the wicked and the stupid also die. In life they were Yao and Shun [sage-emperors]; in death they are rotten bones. In life they were Jie and Zhou [wicked kings]; in death they are rotten bones. Thus they all became rotten bones just the same. Who knows their difference? Let us enjoy our present life. Why should we worry about what comes after death?"<sup>2</sup>

Yang Zhu elucidates three points central to his hedonist philosophy:

1. Death is the final end for the existence of an individual.
2. Man cannot overcome death—that is, the destruction of his physical form—with something extraneous to his body such as fame and glory.
3. Given the preceding two points, man must enjoy the present and forget about death.

Yang Zhu's argument appears to underlie the entire reflective process in poem 13. Although Yang Zhu's hedonist ideas echo in many Han *yuefu* works, they are never so fully expressed as in poem 13 and other similar pieces. The preponderance of hedonist ideas is therefore widely seen as another important thematic feature of the "Nineteen Old Poems."

### **POETIC MODE: FROM THE NARRATIVE TO THE LYRICAL**

The authors of the "Nineteen Old Poems" adopted a mode of presentation markedly different from that used by *yuefu* composers. While *yuefu* composers tended to express themselves through storytelling, they limited the narrative elements to a bare outline while filling in with abundant emotional expressions. To see this reversed balance of narrative and lyrical elements, let us compare three of the "Nineteen Old Poems" with "Watering Horses at the Grotto near the Great Wall (hereafter, "Watering Horses"), a well-known *yuefu* composition attributed by some to **Cai Yong** (132–192).

#### **C5.4**

## No. 6, I Cross the River to Pluck Hibiscus Flowers

I cross the river to pluck hibiscus flowers,	涉江采芙蓉 (shè jiāng cǎi fú róng)
2 In the orchid swamps grow many fragrant herbs.	蘭澤多芳草 (lán zé duō fāng cǎo)
I gather them, but whom shall I send them to?	采之欲遺誰 (cǎi zhī yù wèi shéi)
4 The person in my thought lives far away.	所思在遠道 (suǒ sī zài yuǎn dào)
I turn and look toward my home village,	還顧望舊鄉 (huán gù wàng jiù xiāng)
6 The long road stretches off into the distance.	長路漫浩浩 (cháng lù màn hào hào)
We are of the same heart, but live separately,	同心而離居 (tóng xīn ér lí jū)
8 This sorrow will always be ours until the end of our days!	憂傷以終老 (yōu shāng yǐ zhōng lǎo)

[WX 29.1345]

This poem may be seen as a refashioning of lines 1–3 of “Watering Horses”:

Oh, how green is the grass on the riverbank, How endless is my longing for the distant road.	青青河邊草 (qīng qīng hé pàn cǎo)
The distant road I long for only in vain.	綿綿思遠道 (mián mián sī yuǎo dào) 遠道不可思 (yuǎo dào bù kě sī)

[XQHWJNBCS, 192]

The motif of riverside lamentation is appropriated and turned into a monologue in poem 6. While “Watering Horses” merely touches on the speaker’s emotional state, poem 6 presents us with a sustained process of self-expression. The speaker complains about the distance preventing him from sending the flowers to his wife, looks longingly toward home, and laments their separation.

### C5.5

## No. 16, Cold and Cold: The Year Approaches Its End

	Having given the embroidered quilt to the beauty of the Luo River	錦衾遺洛浦 (jǐn qīn yí luò pǔ)
6	He is now estranged from me, his bedfellow. I sleep alone night after night,	同袍與我違 (tóng páo yǔ wǒ wéi) 獨宿累長夜 (dú sù lěi cháng yè)
8	In my dream I see the radiance of his face. My dear one thinking of our old joys,	夢想見容輝 (mèng xiǎng jiàn róng huī) 良人惟古懽 (liáng rén wéi gǔ huān)
10	Graciously comes and extends to me the rope for boarding his carriage. “I hope to see your beautiful smile often,	枉駕惠前綏 (wǎng jià huì qián suí) 願得常巧笑 (yuàn dé cháng qiǎo xiào)
12	Let us hold hands and return together in my coach.” Come as he did, he would not stay long,	攜手同車歸 (xié shǒu tóng chē guī) 既來不須臾 (jì lái bù xū yú)
14	Nor was he with me in the inner chamber. Truly without the wings of a soaring bird,	又不處重闌 (yòu bù chǔ chóng wǎn) 亮無晨風翼 (liàng wú chén fēng yì)
16	How can I ride on the wind [and fly to him]?	焉能凌風飛 (yān néng líng fēng fēi)

[Lines 5–16; WX 29.1349]

This poem offers a useful comparison with lines 4–8 of “Watering Horses”:

In bed last night I saw him in a dream,	宿昔夢見之 (sù xī mèng jiàn zhī)
In the dream I saw him by my side.	夢見在我傍 (mèng jiàn zài wǒ páng)
Suddenly I awoke to find him still in another town,	忽覺在他鄉 (hū jué zài tā xiāng)
Another town, we each in different counties.	他鄉各異縣 (tā xiāng gè yì xiàn)
Tossing and turning, I could see him no more.	展轉不可見 (zhǎn zhuǎn bù kě jiàn)

Again, we can observe the sharp difference between the narrative and lyrical treatments of a similar situation. Both pieces describe a neglected wife’s dream of a reunion with her husband. “Watering Horses” merely tells us when the neglected wife falls asleep, whom she sees in her dream, and where she finds herself upon waking. By contrast, poem 16 provides minute, intimate details of the neglected wife’s dream: her feeling of estrangement (lines 6–7), her subliminal fulfillment of what she cannot fulfill in her waking life (lines 9–12), and her mournful awakening to the impossibility of regaining her lost love (lines 13–16). Her complex emotions range from elation to utter despair.

## C5.6

### No. 17, The First Winter Month: The Cold Air Comes

	The first winter month—the cold air comes,	孟冬寒氣至	(mèng dōng hán qì zhì)
2	North wind, how bitter and relentless,	北風何慘慄	(běi fēng hé cǎn lì)
	Full of sorrow, I know how long the night is,	愁多知夜長	(chóu duō zhī yè cháng)
4	As I look up at the clusters of stars.	仰觀衆星列	(yǎng guān zhòng xīng liè)
	On the fifteenth, a bright moon waxes;	三五明月滿	(sān wǔ míng yuè mǎn)
6	On the twentieth, toad and hare wane.	四五詹兔缺	(sì wǔ zhān tù quē)
	A traveler came from afar,	客從遠方來	(kè cóng yuǎn fāng lái)
8	Handed a letter to me.	遺我一書札	(wèi wǒ yì shū zhā)
	First it says, “I am always thinking of you,”	上言長相思	(shàng yán cháng xiāng sī)
10	Last it says, “What a long parting!”	下言久離別	(xià yán jiǔ lí bié)
	I keep the letter inside my robe;	書置懷袖中	(shū zhì huái xiù zhōng)
12	After three years, not a single word has faded,	三歲字不滅	(sān suì zì bù miè)
	My whole heart is devoted to you,	一心抱區區	(yì xīn bào qū qū)
14	But I fear you may not see that.	懼君不識察	(jù jūn bù shí chá)

[WX 29.1349–1350]

This poem is obviously a “lyricized” version of the last section of “Watering Horses” (lines 13–20):

A traveler came afar,	客從遠方來	(kè cóng yuǎn fāng lái)
He brought me a double carp	遺我雙鯉魚	(wèi wǒ shuāng lǐ yú)
I called to my boy, “Cook the carp.”	呼兒烹鯉魚	(hū ér pēng lǐ yú)
Inside there was a white silk letter.	中有尺素書	(zhōng yǒu chǐ sù shū)
I knelt down and read the white silk letter.	長跪讀素書	(cháng guì dú sù shū)
What in the world is in the letter?	書中竟何如	(shū zhōng jìng hé rú)
First it says, “Try and eat more.”	上有加餐食	(shàng yǒu jiā cān shí)
Last it says, “I’ll always miss you.”	下有長相憶	(xià yǒu cháng xiāng yì)

Both pieces depict a neglected wife’s receiving a letter from her husband. The depiction of the event is of the same length (eight lines) and begins with an identical line. “Watering Horses” devotes six of the eight lines to the description of the event itself. To enhance story interest, it includes the detail of the surprise discovery of the letter in the double carp. Not until the last two lines does the speaker reveal her emotion. If the narrative prevails over the lyrical in “Watering Horses,” the reverse is true in poem 17. There, all but two lines are devoted to the wife’s selfscrutiny. With narrative elements kept to a minimum, the poet explores a much

richer world of feelings and thoughts, describing not only the husband's profession of love but, more important, the wife's complex response to it.

The shift of balance from the narrative to the lyrical in the "Nineteen Old Poems" is likely the consequence of the disappearance of oral performance. With oral performance gone or marginalized, the authors of the "Nineteen Old Poems" no longer needed to assume the role of a storyteller. As they began to turn inward, a scrutiny of their own emotional condition became the central concern of their works. In exploring their own inner worlds, they were no longer bound by the temporal sequence, as the *yuefu* composers had been when telling stories to a live audience. Very often they would survey their present condition in the first part of the poem, drift back into memory in the second, and then leap into an imagined future in the third. Indeed, following their reflective impulse, they could move among these three temporal realms in any order they chose. Such complex time frames of emotional response occur in as many as twelve poems in the collection.

### POETIC STRUCTURE: *BI-XING* AS GLOBAL STRUCTURE

The "Nineteen Old Poems" also introduces a binary structure markedly different from the sequential structure of the Han *yuefu*. In this collection, the speakers usually observe external situations in the first part of a poem and respond to them emotionally in the second part. In poem 17, for instance, we can clearly perceive this binary structure of external observation and inward reflection. The first half of the poem depicts a desolate wintry scene through the eyes of a lonely woman. The "north wind" stirs the sense of touch; the "stars" appeal to the sense of sight; the "moon" and its mythical metaphor, "toad and hare," evoke the extreme coldness of the Cold Palace (another metaphor for the moon). The second half leads us through a sustained process of self-reflection: the woman's memory of her husband's first and only letter, her gratitude for his words of love, her pledge of loyalty to him, and her fear of his failure to appreciate her fidelity and profound love.

This balanced combination of natural description and emotional response bears the imprint of the *bi-xing* construction in the *Book of Poetry*, which has long been regarded as the ultimate source for the "Nineteen Old Poems." Originally a four-line oral formula, the *bi-xing* construction is substantially expanded in the "Nineteen Old Poems" to

become a distinctive global structure. We can locate a binary structure of natural description and inward reflection in all but two of the nineteen poems. A binary structure identical to that of poem 17 may be found in poem 2 (6:4; six lines of external observation and four lines of inward reflection), poem 4 (8:6), poem 5 (10:6), poem 6 (4:4), poem 7 (8:8), poem 9 (6:2), poem 11 (6:6), poem 13 (10:8), poem 14 (6:4), poem 17 (8:6), poem 18 (6:4), and poem 19 (4:6). In addition, we find a binary structure in reverse order—that is, inward reflection preceding external observation—in poem 3 (8:8), and double binary structures in poem 1 (4:2/6:4), poem 8 (6:2/4:2), poem 12 (6:4/6:4), and poem 16 (6:6/4:4).

The transformation of the *bi-xing* construction from an oral formula to a global structure greatly extended the scope of natural description and emotional expression. In the *Book of Poetry*, natural images are few in number, devoid of variety, and often highly repetitious. Cast in a rigid formula, these images usually do not link up consecutively and thus cannot form a coherent scene. By contrast, in the “Nineteen Old Poems,” natural images coalesce into a coherent scene through a process of perception (poems 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14) or narration (poems 1, 4, 6, 8, 16, 18, and 19). The extended scope and the internal coherence of natural description have not gone unnoticed by critics. For instance, the Tang poet-critic **Wang Changling** (698–756) characterized the new *bi-xing* usage of the “Nineteen Old Poems” in terms of its extended natural description and its perceptual and narrative coherence.<sup>3</sup> The presentation of the speaker’s inner world also undergoes profound changes as a result of the evolution of the *bi-xing* construction. The emotional expression found in these two collections also strikes us as being very different from each other. While in the *Book of Poetry* we hear short, emphatic emotional utterances about a particular external event, we find in the “Nineteen Old Poems” a sustained, melancholic reflection on the meaning or, rather, meaninglessness of human life.

## POETIC TEXTURE: THE DYNAMICS OF SILENT WRITING AND READING

Another important change brought about by the waning of oral performance is the emergence of a new kind of poetic texture. If poetic structure is the framework of a poem, poetic texture results from the interface process—borrowing a phrase from computer science—whereby each word is linked to every other word in an organic whole. Just as

networking denotes a process of multilateral linkage, poetic texture means a process of multilateral interplay among words in a poetic text. In examining poetic texture, we seek to understand not only the contiguous relationship of any word with other words in the same line or the same syntactic unit, but also the noncontiguous relationship of that word with other words placed in either a corresponding or a noncorresponding position in other lines. To take a concrete example, when we focus on the third word of line 4 of a pentasyllabic poem, we must consider, on the one hand, how it links up with the other four words in the same line and, on the other, how it relates to, say, the fifth word of line 2 or the third word of line 6.

In performed poetry, by contrast, establishing and maintaining a tight contiguous relationship of words is a task of primary importance. An oral presentation is essentially a temporal sequence of sounds or auditory signs delivered within an expected duration of time. Once a composer or performer has started his oral presentation, he cannot easily stop without frustrating the live audience. Maintaining a smooth, rhythmic flow of words without the aid of a script is a great challenge for an oral composer or performer. In the process of his oral delivery, he must constantly think of what he is to say in the next breath. In making this effort, he depends greatly on the use of repetition as his aide-mémoire and his cue for the continuation of his presentation. “Mulberry Along the Lane” (C4.8) provides a good example of two common aides-mémoires: *thimble phrasing* (interlocking repetitions) and **incremental repetition**, a device extensively used in the *Book of Poetry* (C1.4) and evident in other ancient or living oral traditions outside China.

In nonperformed poetry, the importance of the contiguous relationship of words decreases while their noncontiguous relationship strengthens. This change has much to do with the different dynamics of written communication. Writing and reading are not as immediate and instantaneous a form of communication as speaking (or other means of oral delivery) and listening. In most circumstances, when two parties are in each other’s presence, they will choose to address each other orally. Only when one party is separated from the other, or when he is not sure how to best express his thoughts impromptu, or when he wants to convey thoughts too awkward or too embarrassing to say out loud, or when he wants to say something that he thinks the other party will need time to think about before responding, will he decide to write to the other party.



Judging by these common circumstances for the use of writing, we can see that writing, as compared with speaking, is a delayed (often purposely) form of communication. In most cases, the writer and the reader are not compelled to respond to each other within a certain time. Consequently, a writer may pause as many times as he wants to think about how to better put his thoughts into words. By the same token, a reader may freely go over the words of a writer again and again before deciding what they mean.

As written communication allows ample time for the coding or decoding of messages, neither the writer nor the reader need depend on word-for-word repetitions to maintain a smooth temporal flow of words. Hence the various aides-mémoires of earlier poems have disappeared in the “Nineteen Old Poems.” Written communication also allows the writer and the reader to explore the noncontiguous relationship of words for the purpose of enhancing an emotive impact. As a writer pauses to review what he has written and makes revisions in the light of what he intends to write next, he naturally builds a system of textual resonance among words placed in different parts of a poem. In fact, this is exactly what the authors of the “Nineteen Old Poems” sought to accomplish in their works.

In describing a natural scene in the first part of a poem, the poets already anticipated the subsequent feelings and thoughts to be expressed and therefore deliberately blended into the scene some words suggestive of the emotive tenor of the second part. Known as **shiyān** (literally, verse eyes) in traditional Chinese criticism, these words, mostly verbs or adjectives, serve to animate descriptions of nature and prefigure the emotions to be subsequently expressed (thematic table of contents 4.2). In poems 1, 4, 7, 8, 11, 12, 14, 16, 17, and 19, such animating words vividly reveal the speaker’s emotional involvement in the external scene. For instance, in the famous lines “The Tartar horse *leans* into the north wind, / The Yue bird *nects* among southern branches” (poem 1, lines 7–8), the words “leans” and “nects” unmistakably bring into the scene the speaker’s own sense of homesickness.<sup>4</sup> Without them, these lines would reveal far less of the speaker’s inner world.

Conversely, when expressing their feelings and thoughts in the second part, the authors of the “Nineteen Old Poems” often refer back to the initial natural scene, purposely using metaphors that resonate with the natural images there. This device I tentatively term “metaphoric resonance.” While verse eyes often anticipate the emotional expressions



in the second part of a poem, metaphorical resonance in the second part brings us back to the natural scene in the first part. Poem 7 provides a good example of the interplay of verse eyes and metaphoric resonance:

### C5.7

#### No. 7, Bright Moon Shines in the Clear Night

	Bright moon shines in the clear night,	明月皎夜光	(míng yuè jiǎo yè guāng)
2	Crickets chirp near the eastern wall.	促織鳴東壁	(cù zhī míng dōng bì)
	The jade handle points to early winter,	玉衡指孟冬	(yù héng zhǐ mèng dōng)
4	The myriad stars, how they crowd into one another!	衆星何歷歷	(zhòng xīng hé lì lì)
	White dew gathers on wild grasses,	白露沾野草	(bái lù zhān yě cǎo)
6	The cycle of seasons suddenly changes again.	時節忽復易	(shí jié hū fù yì)
	Cicadas buzz among the trees,	秋蟬鳴樹間	(qiū chán míng shù jiān)
8	Dark swallows, where have they gone?	玄鳥逝安適	(xuán niǎo shì ān shì)
	Once we were friends studying together,	昔我同門友	(xī wǒ tóng mén yǒu)
10	High you soared, strong, beating wings.	高舉振六翮	(gāo jǔ zhèn liù hé)
	Our friendship you have not remembered,	不念攜手好	(bù niàn xié shǒu hǎo)
12	And abandoned me like a footprint left behind.	棄我如遺跡	(qì wǒ rú yí jì)
	Southern Winnow, Dipper in the North,	南箕有北斗	(nán jī yǒu běi dòu)
14	Or Draught Ox that cannot carry a yoke.	牽牛不負軛	(qiān niú bú fù è)
	Truly, without the firmness of a rock,	良無磐石固	(liáng wú pán shí gù)
16	What good can you gain from these empty names?	虛名復何益	(xū míng fù hé yì)

[WX 29.1346]

The image of “High you soared, strong, beating wings” in line 10 is intended as a metaphor for unscrupulous self-advancement. The constellations Southern Winnow (line 13) and Dipper in the North (line 13) and the star Draught Ox (line 14) are used as metaphors for empty, false friendship. These three images metaphorically convey emptiness and falsehood because they “falsely” use concrete things to represent intangible or “insubstantial” stars. Meanwhile, the images recall what we have seen in the first part. The beating wings (line 10) recall the flight images of the cicadas (line 7) and dark swallows (line 8); the three stellar names bring to mind the polestar, or “jade handle” (line 3), and the crowding stars (line 4) in the first part. Through such imagistic resonance, the four metaphorical images endow the opening autumnal scene with strong emotional overtones, intensifying the interaction between the binary parts, but in the reverse direction of verse eyes.

We should note that the verse eye and metaphorical resonance each introduces alien elements into the binary parts of a poem. But instead of destabilizing the poem's structure, these two devices only make it more dynamic and more aesthetically engaging. Like aesthetic catalysts, they oblige the mind to transcend the boundary between the outer and inner worlds and to constantly move back and forth between them. Commenting on this movement of the mind, the famous Ming critic Wang Shizhen (1526–1590) wrote:

When these ancient people wrote, if there was a forward movement, there would be a backward movement; if there was a thrust downward, there had to be a thrust back upward. To soar like a startled wild goose or to wind along like a swimming dragon: this is the way we follow their rules of composition and the way we seek to understand their meaning. Having grasped this point, we will understand why these poems [the “Nineteen Old Poems”] are thought to be “seamless like clothes made by heaven.”<sup>5</sup>

In the “Nineteen Old Poems,” both the binary structure and the multilateral texture are born of a constant movement between outer and inner worlds in the poets' creative process. In turn, they activate a similar movement in the mind of the reader. The intensification of this mental process can lead to a point where the boundary between the outward and the inward dissolves and a poetic vision emerges.

Zong-qi Cai

#### NOTES

1. Qian Qianyi, *Mu zhai you xue ji* (*The Mu zhai Records of Learning*) (SBCK ed.), 19.22a.
2. *Liezi jishi* (*Collected Commentaries on “Liezi”*) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979), 221; translation from *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, trans. Wing-tsit Chan (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963), 310–311, with minor changes.
3. Wang Changling, *Shi ge* (*Rules of Poetry*), in *Xu Tang shihua* (*A Sequel to the Poetry Talks of the Tang*), ed. Shen Bingxun (Qianlong ed.), A.1.16–21.
4. The Tartars and other nomadic tribes, broadly referred to as the Hu peoples, inhabited the vast region of northern China outside the Great Wall during the Han dynasty. Yue is a region of southern China that is within present-day Zhejiang Province. The Tartar horse leaning into the north wind and the Yue bird nesting among southern branches are expressive of a yearning to return home.
5. Wang Shizhen, *Yiyuan zhiyan* (*Drunken Words in the Garden of Art*), 1, in *Lidai shihua xubian* (*Poetry Talks of Successive Dynasties: A Sequel*), ed. Ding Fubao, 3 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 2:964.

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## **PART 3**

# **The Six Dynasties**

## Pentasyllabic *Shi* Poetry

### Landscape and Farmstead Poems

Nature has always been an integral aspect of traditional Chinese poetry and poetics, beginning with the ***Shijing*** (*The Book of Poetry*). Yet natural imagery in early poetry is limited, often consisting of a few lines that indicate the setting or represent an analogy to the human situation in the poem. It was during the late fourth and early fifth centuries that distinct genres of nature poetry formed independently in the hands of two poets. The intellectual milieu of the early part of the Six Dynasties (222–589), which was dominated by *xuanxue* (abstruse learning), a philosophy and system of scholarship rooted in Daoist metaphysics, fostered this development. In this new learning, nature became both an important site and a source for conversations among the literati. In the context of this prevalent interest in neo-Daoist thought, the passive virtues of withdrawal and serenity were championed and subsequently bolstered the rise of nature poetry. Moreover, the massive southern migration after the fall of the Western Jin court to non-Chinese tribes during the early fourth century brought about a change of scene that was likely conducive to the development of nature poetry: once the émigrés had settled into their new environment, the magnificent and lush landscapes of the south offered stimulating sites for pleasure tours and material for poetry. **Tao Qian** (Tao Yuanming, 365?–427) developed what would later be known as *tianyuan shi* (farmstead poetry [literally, poetry of fields and gardens]) through the depiction of familiar and intimate rustic scenes, while **Xie Lingyun** (385–433) fashioned what would later be called *shanshui shi* (landscape poetry [literally, poetry of mountains and waters]) in his accounts of adventurous treks through beautiful and untamed

mountainous regions. Differences in poetic material and style notwithstanding, both poets found nature—be it grand or domestic—a rich source for meditations on the cosmos as well as a way of life. In this chapter, I outline the early development and main features of farmstead and landscape poetry through an examination of their founding masters and their art.

## **THE FARMSTEAD POETRY OF TAO QIAN**

Tao Qian's simple, direct, yet elegant farmstead poetry has led over time to his being considered one of the greatest Chinese poets. Tao came from a minor elite family, which had lost most of its prestige and wealth by the time he was born. He took his first office relatively late in life (in his late twenties) and retired permanently about thirteen years later, most likely disillusioned by the political unrest of his era and wearied by the constraints of official life. This was no facile decision for a literatus schooled in Confucian ethics, since his withdrawal would mean renouncing aspirations to serve state and society, social respect, and stability of income. After retiring from his last post in 405, Tao spent the rest of his life as a farmer-recluse. He experienced both the joys of material self-sufficiency and the hardships of agrarian life. Tao's life in reclusion, however, was not one of total deprivation or isolation. His love of wine was famous, and while he often drank alone, he was also a convivial drinker who frequently socialized with local officials and other members of the elite. During his lifetime, he acquired local fame as a recluse. It is in this period that most of his surviving works were composed.

Among the poetic subgenres represented in Tao's extant corpus are poems written on official duty, social or exchange poems, poems on historical figures, and farmstead poems based on various meditations and events during his retirement, the last of which constitute the majority of his oeuvre. His farmstead works speak of the joys of rustic life, such as drinking wine, observing nature, playing the zither, reading books, and writing poetry for his own pleasure. And, although many of his later admirers often seem to forget this, he sometimes writes about the tedium of farm life, professing the toils of farmwork and trials of poverty, such as cold and hunger, which, in one instance, are memorably conveyed by these lines, which express the hope for the swift passage of time: "At dusk we would think of the cock crow, / At dawn we hoped the crow

would cross quickly.”<sup>1</sup> Even in his complaints, however, one can still marvel at a tenacious gesture that punctuates many of his works: a reaffirmation of his resolve to remain in reclusion and a declaration of his integrity. But one may also argue that Tao was not consistently at perfect ease with his choice of reclusion, hence the need to frequently reaffirm his resolve.

Farmstead poetry as defined by Tao’s works and interpreted by most later practitioners of the genre (notably in the Tang dynasty) nonetheless typically focuses on the idyllic aspects of rustic life: leisure, calm, and freedom. Accordingly, simplicity and ease characterize its poetic style and diction. This genre is generally indissociable from the context of withdrawal from office (actual or fancied, permanent or temporary), as farmstead poems are born in rustic experience. I have selected four of Tao’s best-known works in the genre to illustrate the ways in which he represents rustic life and reflects on nature, reclusion, and himself.

The following poem is the first of a series of five, probably written shortly after Tao’s retirement from office. The mood is sanguine and the tone, celebratory:

## C6.1

### Returning to Live on the Farm, No. 1

Since youth out of tune with the vulgar world,	歸園田居 其一 (guī yuán tián jū qí yī)
2 My nature instinctively loves hills and mountains.	少無適俗韻 (shào wú shì sú yùn)
By mishap I fell into the dusty net,	性本愛丘山 (xìng běn ài qiū shān)
4 Once gone, thirteen years went by.	誤落塵網中 (wù luò chén wǎng zhōng)
The caged bird longs for its grove of old,	一去三十年 (yí qù sān shí nián)
	羈鳥戀舊林 (jī niǎo liàn jiù lín)

6	The pond's fish thinks of its former depths. Clearing land at the edge of the southern wilds,	池魚思故淵 開荒南野際	(chí yú sī gù yuān) (kāi huāng nán yě ji)
8	Guarding simplicity, I returned to my farm. The homestead amounts to ten-odd <i>mou</i> ,	守拙歸園田 方宅十餘畝	(shǒu zhuō guī yuán tián) (fāng zhái shí yú mǔ)
10	With a thatched hut of eight or nine bays. Elms and willows shade the rear eaves,	草屋八九間 榆柳蔭後簷	(cǎo wū bā jiǔ jiān) (yú liǔ yìn hòu yán)
12	Peach and plum line up in front of the hall. In a haze lie the distant villages,	桃李羅堂前 曖曖遠人村	(táo lǐ luó táng qián) (ài ài yuǎn rén cūn)
14	Indistinct is the smoke above the houses. A dog barks somewhere in the deep alley,	依依墟里煙 狗吠深巷中	(yī yī xū lǐ yān) (gǒu fèi shēn xiàng zhōng)
16	A cock crows from atop the mulberry tree. My home is unsoiled by worldly dust,	雞鳴桑樹顛 戶庭無塵雜	(jī míng sāng shù diān) (hù tíng wú chén zá)
18	Within empty rooms I have peace to spare. For long I have lived within a cage,	虛室有餘閒 久在樊籠裡	(xū shì yǒu yú xián) (jiǔ zài fān lóng lǐ)
20	And now I may return to nature.	復得返自然	(fù dé fǎn zì rán)

[TYMJJJ, 73]

The poem's structure divides into three distinct parts, connected by familiar tropic markers. Lines 1–4 constitute a statement of the poet's natural disposition and, implicitly, an explanation for his withdrawal from office. The poet's innate love of nature and his perennial inability to get on with the world lead him to declare the last thirteen years (emended from "thirty") in officialdom to have been a mistake.<sup>2</sup> A metaphoric couplet, serving as a bridge between the discursive opener and a series of descriptive couplets, reiterates the poet's natural inclinations. Just like the caged bird and trapped fish, the poet longs for his native place. By some external intervention, these creatures became confined to a cage, a pond, or the dusty net (that is, official life). The image of displaced animals longing for home is a conventional trope dating from Han poetry about travelers (for example, C5.1), and its use here effectively "naturalizes" the poet's desire to leave office and return to his farm.

The second part of the poem consists of an extended description of the material circumstances of the poet's rustic life: from details about the size of his farm, the type of trees surrounding his home, to neighboring villages. This description vividly illustrates the value of the poet's choice of lifestyle. Next, an allusive couplet (lines 15–16), lifted almost verbatim from a Han ancient-style poem and possibly referring to a passage in chapter 80 of the *Dao de jing* (*Book of the Way and Its Power*)—on the peaceful coexistence between neighboring communities that can hear, each in the other, dog barks and cock crows yet have no contact with



each other—caps the idea developed in previous lines of a certain rustic tranquillity and harmony. The allusive nature of the couplet does not preclude it from being part of the perceived scene, in view of the descriptive couplets preceding it. Its philosophical point, however, is more remarkable and makes it an apt transition to the meditation in the final part of the poem.

The poem concludes with an affirmation of the freedom gained by withdrawal. The term *ziran* in the last line may refer to nature (supported by the descriptive couplets), one's own nature (harking back to the first couplet), and/or freedom (by extension of the first two referents). This tripartite pattern (explanation of natural disposition, description of pastoral life, and affirmation of choice of lifestyle) was often borrowed by Tang writers of farmstead poetry, such as **Wang Wei** (701?–761) and Chu Guangxi (fl. 726), who likely found this logic of representation effective in vindicating an alternative way of life, reclusion.

Not all of Tao's farmstead poems are structured in the same manner, but they consistently display a rhetorical simplicity that approaches oral language. The use of the reduplicative binomes (*diezi*) *aiai* and *yiyi* in the seventh couplet moreover draws on a certain archaic plainness and rhythm associated with the *Shijing* and Han ancient-style verse, in which such descriptive phrases are common. Reduplicative binomes are a standard feature of ancient speech; their use here heightens not only the archaic but also the colloquial effects of the poem. The copious use of parallelism, it should be noted, is unusual for Tao's poems but typical in late Six Dynasties poetry; besides the first two and the last couplets, all are parallel, although lines 7–8, 11–12, and 13–14 are not perfectly so. Even in such instances in which technique is evident, the overall effect impresses the reader with a certain artless grace. The lack of craft in Tao's farmstead poems blatantly opposed contemporary aesthetic taste, which prized artful refinement; his works were thus generally dismissed as the "words of a mere farmer."<sup>3</sup> Yet Tao seems to have found that simplicity and directness of expression accorded best with the basic, rustic life he portrays in his poems. Interestingly, the absence of apparent artifice in Tao's compositions, once scorned by most, became centuries later one of his most admired trademarks. This attribute supported the interpretation of Tao's poetry as *ziran* (natural or spontaneous) in the Song dynasty (960–1279) and onward, which in turn helped establish his inimitability; the significance of this conviction in the elevation of Tao to an absolute poetic model can hardly be overstated.

Images of rustic scenes constitute a significant part of Tao's representation of his retirement, as in "Returning to Live on the Farm"; yet he is at times more concerned with conveying the *feel* of the rustic setting than the *look* of it. With the lines "In a haze lie the distant villages, / Indistinct is the smoke above the houses," he gives the *idea* of a small rustic village without defining it in a visually precise way. Emphasis here is thus placed on *yi zhong zhi jing* (the scene within the mind).<sup>4</sup> When Wang Wei reworks this couplet for one of his own farmstead poems centuries later,<sup>5</sup> greater attention is given to the crafting of imagery, which not only defines to a great extent the poetic art of his era but also reveals a difference between Tao's farmstead poetry and the High Tang (713–755) adaptation of it.

The rustic setting in Tao's farmstead poems, built by recurring descriptions of such various props as agricultural fields, plants, and animals, provided the poet a space in which he could discourse on a philosophy of reclusion as well as observations on man and nature. No poem in Tao's oeuvre is more abundant with such meditations than perhaps his most oft-cited poem on wine drinking:

## C6.2

### On Drinking Wine, No. 5

	I built my hut in the midst of men,	飲酒 其五	(yǐn jiǔ qí wǔ)
2	Yet hear no clamor of horse and carriage.	結廬在人境	(jié lú zài rén jìng)
	You ask how it can be like this?	而無車馬喧	(ér wú jū mǎ xuān)
4	With the mind detached, place becomes remote.	問君何能爾	(wèn jūn hé néng ěr)
	Plucking chrysanthemums by the eastern hedge,	心遠地自偏	(xīn yuǎn dì zì piān)
6	From afar I catch sight of the southern mountain.	採菊東籬下	(cǎi jú dōng lí xià)
	The mountain air becomes lovely at sunset,	悠然見南山	(yōu rán jiàn nán shān)
8	As flying birds return together in flocks.	山氣日夕佳	(shān qì rì xī jiā)
	In these things there is true meaning,	飛鳥相與還	(fēi niǎo xiāng yǔ huán)
10	I'd like to explain, but have forgotten the words.	此中有真意	(cǐ zhōng yǒu zhēn yì)
		欲辨已忘言	(yù biàn yǐ wàng yán)

[TYMJJJ, 219–220]

The poet's detached mind (set into relief by the location of his house amid civilization) renders possible the insight of the last couplet. That reclusion is less about physical place than a state of mind is perhaps Tao's most powerful statement on reclusion. Receptivity to daily scenes in nature often taken for granted depends on the recluse's state of mind.

A detached mind is the precondition for the poet's attention to details and the chance interplay of these details: he plucks chrysanthemums (often infused in wine for prolonging life) as he happens to catch sight of the southern mountain, symbol of longevity; and he notices the lovely air at dusk as he happens to see the homing birds. The sudden revelation named in the last couplet seems to have evoked a transcendent state of mind that is not merely impossible but undesirable to capture with words. Indeed, this couplet has remained so effective precisely for what it promises but does not say. The source of the last couplet is three passages in the **Zhuangzi**, either arguing for the incapacity of language for total expression or prizing meaning over its vehicle: words.<sup>6</sup> Suggesting meaning beyond the words, a literary quality that became increasingly valued, points to the text's possibility of perpetual signification and continual savoring.

The poet may be reticent, but the literary critic can nonetheless ponder on and say something about this insight in the last couplet. First of all, it involves the exquisite delight the poet finds in the commonplace activities of rustic living, such as plucking chrysanthemums and observing the mountain scene at dusk. Second, it may well be a recognition of correlations between the natural and human realms, whose intersections are often overlooked by men absorbed in the humdrum of mundane life. There are hidden significances in the natural world that either correspond to or are revealed by human actions: the birds' natural instinct to return home corresponds to the poet's return, which he presents elsewhere in his writings as his natural course; and as the poet picks chrysanthemums (a substance for prolonging life), he sees the southern mountain (a symbol of long life). Therein lies a truth that no amount of language can adequately convey. Third, it seems to mark a transcendent state in which a mystical union between nature and poet has taken place, and the distinction between object and self has been all but obliterated.

The most impressive couplet of the poem (and undoubtedly the most often quoted from Tao's writings) is "Plucking chrysanthemums by the eastern hedge, / From afar I catch sight of the southern mountain." The symbolic significance of the acts of picking chrysanthemums and seeing the southern mountain have been duly noted. While each act may be commonplace in the leisure of rustic life, their coincidence makes the scene poignantly poetic. What makes this couplet even more remarkable is its textual history: in certain Song editions of Tao's works, *wang* (to gaze from afar) appears as a variant for *jian* (to catch sight of). The great

Song critic and writer **Su Shi** (1037–1101) was the first to argue passionately against *wang* in favor of *jian*, positing the latter as key to the piece's *shenqi* (inspired air). Indeed, for critics following Su Shi's reading, *wang* denotes a certain intentionality that runs counter to the happy coincidence of *jing* (scene) and *yi* (idea), wherein lies, for Su, the marvelous subtlety of the couplet.<sup>7</sup> More recently, critics have differentiated further between *jian* and *xian* (to appear; the line would then read: "At a distance the southern mountain appears"), reducing even further the subjective presence of the poet. It is possible that the late Qing critic **Wang Guowei** (1877–1927) had this reading in mind when he remarked that this couplet describes ***wu wo zhi jing*** (a selfless state), in which ***wu*** (object) and ***wo*** (self) cannot be differentiated from each other and "objects are seen through the perspective of objects" (*yi wu guan wu*). This state, more difficult to create in poetry than one in which the self is present (***you wo zhi jing***) and objects are seen through the perspective of the self (*yi wo guan wu*), is a testimony of excellence of spirit and skill, as Wang suggested.<sup>8</sup>

An intuitive engagement with nature occurs frequently in Tao's farmstead poetry. In "On Drinking Wine, No. 7," the poet ponders the beauty and significance of nature on an autumn dusk:

### C6.3

#### On Drinking Wine, No. 7

	Autumn chrysanthemums have lovely colors;	秋菊有佳色	(qiū jú yǒu jiā sè)
2	I pluck the blossoms dampened with dew.	裛露掇其英	(yì lù duó qí yīng)
	I float these in this Care Forgetting Thing	汎此忘憂物	(fàn cǐ wàng yōu wù)
4	To push away lingering thoughts of the world.	遠我遺世情	(yuǎn wǒ yí shì qíng)
	Although I drink this cup alone,	一觴雖獨進	(yì shāng suī dú jìn)
6	When it empties, I'll pour the next one too.	杯盡壺自傾	(bēi jìn hú zì qīng)
	At sunset, all movement comes to a rest,	日入群動息	(rì rù qún dòng xī)
8	Homing birds chirp as they return to their grove.	歸鳥趨林鳴	(guī niǎo qū lín míng)
	I whistle complacently from the eastern veranda,	嘯傲東軒下	(xiào ào dōng xuān xià)
10	Somehow having found my life again.	聊復得此生	(liáo fù dé cǐ shēng)

[TYMJJJ, 224]

Natural phenomena and the poet's activities are harmoniously integrated into an idyllic rustic scene. The correspondences between nature and the poet's world can be described as follows: On a basic

level, the poet takes in nature by ingesting chrysanthemum petals (infused in wine, or the “Care Forgetting Thing”). Nature provides him with what he needs. On a more meaningful level, the poet is in tune with nature. He whistles at home, while the birds sing as they return to their roosts. While chrysanthemums and homing birds are clearly part of the perceived scene, they also belong to a symbolic code in Tao’s writings. As the definitive flower of autumn, the chrysanthemum represents the year’s end and activities associated with it: most relevant here, meditation on one’s life and mortality. Also, homing birds are never just literally homing birds in Tao’s poetry; they are also a metaphor for the poet’s own returning.

The picture the poem draws may be idyllic (a recluse-poet enjoying the leisure of drinking and appreciating the autumn scene from his veranda), but the hint of disquiet in the second couplet threatens to disrupt the overall tranquil mood of the scene. The poet seems to admit to certain troublesome sentiments about leaving officialdom: the “lingering thoughts of the world” suggest a certain uneasiness or doubt. But this potential conflict is quickly resolved in the next two couplets: the poet is able to dispel his cares by enjoying wine in solitude and nature’s activities at dusk. This transformation paves the way for the remarkable sense of satisfaction in the last couplet. This contentment seems to be the result of having taken stock of all the wonderful aspects of rustic living: enjoying the beauty of natural phenomena, drinking wine to one’s content, living in idleness, and being in tune with nature’s activities. This gesture of reaffirming the choice of seclusion is no doubt familiar by now.

Wine drinking, a standard act in Tao’s poetic portrayals of farmstead life, warrants some explanation. Readers have long noted the copious references to drinking in Tao’s poems: The first known editor of Tao’s works, **Xiao Tong** (501–531), wrote that “there are those who have doubts about Tao Yuanming’s poetry, since wine is present in each poem.” Xiao then opined that “I, however, think that his true intentions do not lie in wine; rather, he made his mark through wine.”<sup>9</sup> The notion of *ji* (trace) refers, in the Chinese cultural lexicon, to an outer manifestation of an inner sentiment that cannot be explicitly or directly expressed. Although regular wine drinking was rarely viewed pejoratively as a form of alcoholism by Chinese literati and had become a defining part of the elite culture of the Wei (220–265) and Jin (265–420) dynasties, Xiao Tong’s defense elevates Tao’s drinking to the level of an outlet for suppressed emotions, much like the use of wine associated with **Ruan Ji**



(210–263), the silenced poet who made extensive use of allegory in his self-expressions.<sup>10</sup> Wine bibbing in the preceding poem does not merely denote relaxed pleasure but also implies a reflection on failed personal ambition and/or the political state of affairs.

Farmstead poems arose from social interaction as well as from solitary reflection. A number of Tao's farmstead poems refer to the company of family, friends, and neighbors. This should not be surprising, as reclusion was often a highly sociable practice during the Six Dynasties, being defined primarily in contradistinction to office holding rather than to society at large. In "On Moving House, No. 2," the poet presents the more convivial side of rustic retirement:

## C6.4

### On Moving House, No. 2

- Spring and autumn have many fine days,  
 2 For ascending heights and writing new poems.  
 As we pass by gates, we call to each other,  
 4 Whoever has wine will pour some out.  
 When there's farmwork to be done, we all go home  
 6 And when we have leisure, we think of each other.  
 Thinking of each other, we then throw on our coats,  
 8 We never tire of talk and laughter.  
 This way of life cannot be surpassed,  
 10 There is no need to hurry from here.  
 As clothing and food must be provided,  
 12 If I work at plowing, it will not cheat me.

### 移居二首 其二 (yí jū èr shǒu qí èr)

- 春秋多佳日 (chūn qiū duō jiā rì)  
 登高賦新詩 (dēng gāo fù xīn shī)  
 過門更相呼 (guò mén gēng xiāng hū)  
 有酒斟酌之 (yǒu jiǔ zhēn zhuó zhī)  
 農務各自歸 (nóng wù gè zì guī)  
 閒暇輒相思 (xián xiá zhé xiāng sī)  
 相思則披衣 (xiāng sī zé pī yī)  
 言笑無厭時 (yán xiào wú yàn shí)  
 此理將不勝 (cǐ lǐ jiāng bù shèng)  
 無為忽去茲 (wú wéi hū qù zī)  
 衣食當須紀 (yī shí dāng xū jì)  
 力耕不吾欺 (lì gēng bù wú qī)

[TYMJJJ, 117]

While the location of Tao's new residence, "South Town," was debated by traditional scholars, who variously identified it as Lili (Chestnut Village), Nanli (South Village), or a place in Chaisang (modern Jiujiang in Jiangxi), the date of composition has generally been posited to be sometime after Tao's house burned down in 408 (the dates of 410 and 412 have been suggested by scholars). The town appears to have been inhabited by "an unusual collection of recluses like Tao himself—literate, educated, but holding no public position and committed to making a livelihood out of farming. Not ordinary peasants, certainly, nor yet landlords with tenants to till the land for them," as James R. Hightower has convincingly argued.<sup>11</sup> The depiction of rustic life here consists of

writing poetry, drinking wine, keeping company with like-minded men, and occasionally farming. The last lines in the first poem of the set moreover relate that the poet and his neighbors read and discuss works from the past. Simple pleasures of rustic leisure become uncommon bliss when there are sympathetic friends to share them.

The slight amount of representation of actual farmwork in this poem is typical of the genre. Details of farming are rarely found in Tao's poems. This poem begins by naming the two seasons crucial to agriculture and concludes by declaring the will to farm. But the lines in between tell mostly of the relationship between the poet and his neighbors, describing thoroughly their activities of leisure. The poem also focuses on the spontaneity and casualness that characterize their interaction, which imaginably opposes that governed by restraint and decorum among men in office.

In addition to a description of rural life, this poem contains two other common features of Tao's farmstead poetry: a meditation on his way of life and a reaffirmation of his choice of withdrawal. The word *li* (translated as "way of life," it literally means "principle") in line 9 arguably refers to an insight into the way of rustic reclusion: finding delight in the simple yet rewarding aspects of rural life, a view that seems to be supported by others who share his ideals. This "principle" may also refer to an understanding of agriculture, as suggested by the last couplet of the poem: farming is not a lesser endeavor (which counters the attitude generally held by the Confucian elite), since material sustenance is fundamental to life, and honest labor will surely yield tangible rewards. The exhortation to farm in the last line translates to a reaffirmation of the poet's choice of lifestyle.

Farmstead poetry, as developed by Tao and adapted by later writers, typically includes the following features: depictions of idyllic, rural scenes; a focus on the leisure and contentment of rustic life; the use of symbolic natural images; simple and direct expressions; as well as meditations on reclusion, the significance of nature's workings, and their correspondence with the human realm. This genre languished for centuries after Tao's death, attracting little interest from Six Dynasties poets; but during the Tang, many writers found the farmstead topos to be a fruitful medium for creating an idealized realm in which they could seek solace from the constraints of court life and from disappointments in public service. Their portrayals of farmstead life were generally trimmed of practical matters of self-sustenance and of the sense of unease and melancholy sometimes

found in Tao's works. Selections of Tao's life and works became a rich source of poetic material for new examples of farmstead poems. Writing farmstead poetry became a vogue with High Tang poets, and the development of the genre reached its apex in their works.

## THE LANDSCAPE POETRY OF XIE LINGYUN

Xie Lingyun, a scion of an illustrious aristocratic clan of the Six Dynasties, led a life of privilege and leisure. His official biography paints him as an outlandish and temperamental character. Unable to realize his political ambition and finding himself in exile from court in his prime, Xie turned toward an aesthetic engagement with nature and a spiritual quest for enlightenment. Xie has long been acknowledged as the originary model for Chinese landscape poetry. While he was by no means the first poet to use images of mountains and waters or to employ nature as a way to express his ideas and sentiments, he unequivocally established "mountains and waters" as a poetic subject in its own right. Unlike the sparse lines of natural imagery found in *xuanyan shi* (abstruse poetry), philosophical verse rooted in Daoist thought that was in vogue during the fourth century, extensive exposition of the natural scene in Xie's works marks the birth of landscape poetry as a genre. In contrast to philosophical poetry, in which natural imagery serves predominantly as metaphors for ideas or the literal background for the figures or events in the poem, Xie's landscape poetry contains elaborate descriptions of nature in which mountains and waters become objects of the aesthetic gaze. To be sure, Xie's landscape poems are based on physical and intimate contact with the subject at hand. He toured the magnificent landscapes of Zhejiang with admirable enthusiasm, even designing a type of wooden clog for hiking up and down mountains.

One late Six Dynasties critic, **Liu Xie** (ca. 465–ca. 522), observed that during the early part of the Liu Song dynasty (420–479), "Laozi and Zhuangzi retreated into the background, while mountains and waters came to flourish."<sup>12</sup> This influential statement refers to the replacement of abstruse poetry by landscape poetry as the dominant literary mode, and it has generally been interpreted to recount the vanishing of Daoist philosophy from poetry. While it is true that landscape poetry propounds more the aesthetic appraisal of natural scenes than a view of nature as mere metaphor for metaphysical notions, the modern scholar Wang Yao has argued that this shift in literary trend does not mark a transformation



in poets' ideas about life and the cosmos but signals a change in poetic material.<sup>13</sup> Mountains and waters make ideal vehicles for the manifestation (or contemplation) of the Dao, or Way. Indeed, Xie's landscape poems almost invariably conclude with some kind of philosophical meditation. Hence, Lao–Zhuang philosophy did not in fact retreat into the background but masqueraded itself in the guise of mountains and waters, as Wang has put it.<sup>14</sup> Landscape poetry may nevertheless be distinguished from plain philosophical verse, characterized by the Six Dynasties critic **Zhong Rong** (ca. 469–518) as insipid and dicta-like, by its lush descriptions of mountains and waters and a certain emotive lyricism.

Xie's landscape poems are laden with artfully crafted lines, strictly parallel couplets, obscure words, and literary allusions. Their erudition and denseness make them difficult to read in the original and unfortunate to read in translation. Yet there are great rewards for working through his verse: beautiful representations of natural landscapes that truly enliven his subject and profound insights into nature's workings and their correlation to man. I discuss three of Xie's best-known landscape poems to illustrate his aesthetic representation and understanding of nature. In "Climbing Yongjia's Green Crag Mountain," the poet describes in full a journey into a mountain in Yongjia (modern Zhejiang), where he held a post in exile in 422 and 423:

## C6.5

Climbing Yongjia's Green Crag Mountain		登永嘉綠嶂山 (dēng yǒng jiā lǜ zhàng shān)
I packed some provisions and grabbed a light staff,		裹糧杖輕策 (guǒ liáng zhàng qīng cè)
2 Following the winding path, I climbed to my hidden abode.		懷遲上幽室 (huái chí shàng yōu shì)
As I proceeded upstream, the path wound further away,		行源逕轉遠 (xíng yuán jìng zhuǎn yuǎn)
4 When I reached the peak, my emotions were not yet exhausted.		距陸情未畢 (jù lù qíng wèi bì)
Gentle ripples congeal in wintry beauty,		澹澌結寒姿 (dàn lìàn jié hán zī)

6	Bamboos glisten in frosted strength. The stream winds about, its water often losing its way,	團樂潤霜質 澗委水屢迷	(tuán luán rùn shuāng zhì) (jiàn wěi shuǐ lǚ mí)
8	The forest stretched far, crags ever more dense. I looked westward, expecting the rising moon,	林迥巖逾密 眷西謂初月	(lín jiǒng yán yú mì) (juàn xī wèi chū yuè)
10	I gazed eastward, wondering about the setting sun. I walked until evening, having stayed from dawn to dusk,	顧東疑落日 踐夕奄昏曙	(gù dōng yí luò rì) (jiàn xī yǎn hūn shǔ)
12	Even the most secluded spots have all become familiar. “Decay” at the top: best to serve no one at all,	蔽翳皆周悉 蠱上貴不事	(bì yì jiē zhōu xī) (gǔ shàng guì bú shì)
14	“Treading” in the second place: extol good fortune. A recluse will always walk a level step,	履二美貞吉 幽人常坦步	(lǚ èr měi zhēn jí) (yōu rén cháng tǎn bù)
16	His lofty aims, so remote, are hard to match. A yes and a no—how far apart are they?	高尚邈難匹 頤阿竟何端	(gāo shàng miǎo nán pǐ) (yí ē jìng hé duān)
18	In quietude, I entrust myself to all-embracing Unity. As tranquillity and knowledge conjoin,	寂寂寄抱一 恬如既已交	(jì jì jì bào yī) (tián rú jì yǐ jiāo)
20	From that point on, one’s nature begins to heal.	繕性自此出	(shàn xìng zì cǐ chū)

[XLYJJZ, 56]

One fruitful approach to a difficult text is to analyze first its structure and identify the function of its components. Modern scholars have described the structural pattern of Xie’s landscape poems as journey narration, scene description, stirred emotion, and philosophical meditation. While this outline is not inaccurate, it omits a place in the sequence for allusions to the *Yijing* (*Book of Changes*), a recurrent source for citation in Xie’s works and an important key to understanding his poetic practice. For Xie, the *Yijing* imitates, corresponds to, or represents in microcosm the realm of heaven-and-earth. It is thus a handy guide to the ongoing processes in the realm of heaven-and-earth, the study of which may aid people in determining their actions. The relationship between the realms of heaven-and-earth and human society, with the *Yijing* as mediator, is often duplicated in Xie’s landscape poetry by the structural sequence of natural scenes, *Yijing* allusions, and a decision on a new course of action.

The allusions in lines 13 and 14 require some explanation. Line 13 alludes to the Top Yang of the hexagram *Gu* (Decay): “He does not serve kings and princes, / Sets himself higher goals.”<sup>15</sup> Line 14 is drawn from the Second Yang of the hexagram *Lü* (Treading): “The path to tread on is level and smooth, and if one secluded here practices constancy, he will have good fortune.”<sup>16</sup> The allusions to the *Yijing*, taken together, present a story of a man whose pursuits lie well beyond the fame and wealth that officialdom has to offer. Prospects of worldly success do not seduce this recluse, who constantly keeps to the level way, which has implications of

both the Dao and a path that is free from dangerous obstacles. To particularize the significance of the allusions with regard to the poet's situation, these lines may mean that by not allowing the affairs of government to shackle him, the poet enjoys the good fortune of visiting the gorgeous sites for which Yongjia is famous. They may also be interpreted allegorically as political criticism: the decadent Emperor Shao (r. 422–423) represents "'Decay' at the top," while the exiled poet is the secluded man who assumes a position of secondary importance.

A comprehensive account of the poem's structure divides it into five quatrains, each with a different focus. Lines 1–4 recount the entire process of ascent: preparation, the climb, and arrival at the peak. Lines 5–8 describe the winter scene that the poet witnesses from the summit. Lines 9–12 are characterized by confusion and obscurity, which apparently result from the poet's deep venture into the mountains. Lines 13–16, containing two *Yijing* allusions, form a self-contained set. A chiasmus yields a tight, circular quatrain. Line 16 expands on the allusion in line 13, while line 15 elucidates the prognostication in line 14. Lines 17–20 reveal the poet's new course of action, whose features, "all-embracing Unity" (*bao yi*) and the mending of one's nature (*shan xing*), are markedly Daoist. The poet attempts to reconcile himself to his exile from court and plans to seek spiritual enlightenment.

It is by no means coincidental that the allusions to the *Yijing* are sandwiched between three quatrains that depict a natural landscape and the poet's engagement within it and a quatrain that evidences a spiritual transformation. It is moreover significant that the two allusions appear between a state of obscurity (the third quatrain) and a state of clarity (the fifth quatrain). In this poem, the allusions to the *Yijing* signal not only change but also, more specifically, a transition from exterior to interior landscape, which implies the poet's intention to establish a signifying relation between the particulars of the natural world and his own situation, and thus affirms the link between the realm of heaven-and earth and the realm of human affairs.

Xie's landscape poems have long been appreciated for embodying philosophical principle (*li*) as well as exemplifying the art of *xingsi* (verisimilitude). His descriptive details in lines 5–8 capture the entire appearance of the landscape: from the gently rippling water to the glossy bamboo grove, and from the meandering stream to the extensive forest and dense mountain. The pairing of mountain and water in a single couplet is a staple feature of the landscape poetry of Xie and his

followers. This alternation between mountain and water not only identifies the poetic subjects but also, more important, mimics the dense, layered arrangement of crags/ peaks and rivers/streams in nature. Poetic form again imitates natural form in the poet's use of rhyming binomes, where the same final signals a continuity within variation, hence creating texture. The rhyming binomes *dan lian* (line 5) and *tuan luan* (line 6) auditorily convey a certain texture in the appearance of the rippling water and glossy bamboo. Difficult phrasing in this descriptive passage moreover underscores the nature of the mountainous terrain.

Xie's landscape poems are typically rich in descriptive details of the natural scene. In some cases, an exposition of natural images is made even more interesting by a transformation in the poet's perception of the landscape. An especially good example is "What I Observed as I Crossed the Lake on My Way from Southern Mountain to Northern Mountain":

## C6.6

### What I Observed as I Crossed the Lake on My Way from Southern Mountain to Northern Mountain

於南山往北山經湖中瞻眺  
(yú nán shān wǎng běi shān jīng hú zhōng zhān tiào)

At daybreak I set out from the southern cliffs,	朝旦發陽崖 (zhāo dàn fā yáng yá)
2 At sunset I rest at the northern peak.	景落憇陰峰 (jǐng luò qì yīn fēng)
Leaving my boat, I gaze at the distant isles,	舍舟眺迴渚 (shě zhōu tiào jiǒng zhǔ)
4 Stopping my staff, I lean against a flourishing pine.	停策倚茂松 (tíng cè yǐ mào sōng)
The side paths are dark and secluded,	側逕既窈窕 (cè jìng jì yǎo tiǎo)
6 While the circular island is gleaming bright.	環洲亦玲瓏 (huán zhōu yì líng lóng)
I look down, spying the tips of towering trees,	俛視喬木杪 (miǎn shì qiáo mù miǎo)
8 And look up, hearing the roars of the grand ravines.	仰聆大壑瀟 (yǎng líng dà huò cóng)
Over the crosswise rocks, the water parts its flow;	石橫水分流 (shí héng shuǐ fēn liú)
10 The woods are so dense paths end their traces.	林密蹊絕蹤 (lín mì xī jué zōng)
"Releasing" and making bring about what ends?	解作竟何感 (xiè zuò jìng hé gǎn)
12 "Climbing" and growing manifest richly everywhere.	升長皆豐容 (shēng zhǎng jiē fēng róng)
First bamboo shoots, enwrapped by green shells,	初篁苞綠籜 (chū huáng bāo lǜ tuò)
14 New rushes, held in purple buds.	新蒲含紫茸 (xīn pǔ hán zǐ róng)
Seagulls sport on the vernal shores,	海鷗戲春岸 (hǎi ōu xì chūn àn)
16 Golden pheasants play with the gentle wind.	天雞弄和風 (tiān jī nòng hé fēng)
Embracing change, my heart never tires,	撫化心無厭 (fǔ huà xīn wú yàn)
18 Observing these things, I cherish them even more.	覽物眷彌重 (lǎn wù juàn mí zhòng)
I do not regret that I am far from the ancients,	不惜去人遠 (bù xī qù rén yuǎn)
20 I only lament that there is no one to join me.	但恨莫與同 (dàn hèn mò yǔ tóng)
Wandering alone, I sigh not out of personal sentiments,	孤遊非情歎 (gū yóu fēi qíng tàn)
22 Rather if appreciation is abandoned, who else will understand Nature's principles?	賞廢理誰通 (shǎng fèi lǐ shuí tōng)

The basic story of the poem is straightforward and familiar enough: the poet tours the mountains and waters and describes what he sees and thinks. However, it is not altogether clear from which location and at what time of day the lines in the first half of the poem are written. The poem takes place sometime between dawn and dusk and somewhere between peak and shore. This ambivalence is aimed less at mystifying the picture than at providing a comprehensive representation that transcends time and space.

A look at the function of the allusions to the *Yijing* will shed some light on the development of the poem. The allusions in lines 11 and 12 refer to how cosmic operations (*tiandao* [literally, way of heaven]) reified in meteorological phenomena may bring about regeneration in the sphere of terrestrial processes (*didao* [literally, way of earth]). The poet demonstrates his understanding of this principle by representing springtime growth and activity in the lines following the question posed in line 11: “‘Releasing’ and making bring about what ends?” The allusions to the *Yijing* mark unequivocal changes in both the style and the perspective of the poem. The description of the landscape that precedes the allusions is written with a grand scope and robust style, while the descriptions that follow have a touch of subtlety and delicacy. The lines preceding the allusions (lines 1–10) contain sublime scenes of mountains and waters, in which the season is not discernible. They contrast with the scenes of minute springtime detail, such as the purple buds of new rushes and the green skin of early bamboo, which appear after the allusions. This difference in perspective coincides with yet another set of stylistic changes. In roughly the first half of the poem, we find the antithetical binaries of dawn and dusk, dark path and bright island, and trees below and torrents above. In the lines that follow the allusions, we note the complementary pairs of early bamboo and newborn rushes and springtime shore and mild wind. This shift from antithetical to complementary parallelism seems to correspond to an increase in intimacy between the poet and nature. The appearance of the *Yijing* allusions (lines 11–12) marks the beginning of the poet’s union with nature, which is revealed in his understanding and appreciation of its workings (lines 13–18). That the allusions appear immediately before the passage revealing the harmony between the poet and his natural

surroundings, moreover, suggests that the *Yijing* serves as a catalyst to this union.

The poet's engagement with nature is further specified in the last four lines of the poem. The absence of a like-minded companion may be a source of personal regret for the poet. But the possibility that the principles (*li*) recorded in the *Yijing* and manifested in the natural world might go unappreciated (in the sense of both admiring and grasping) is a concern that assumes precedence over individual want. The poet has made it his task not only to enjoy but also to probe into nature's workings. For Xie, nature is not merely a source of sensuous pleasure but the embodiment of the Dao. The contemplation of natural landscapes may thus lead the viewer to enlightenment.

Certain formal features of the poem augment its semantic points. For example, each of the lines describing springtime growth and activity (lines 13–16) contains a ***shiyan*** (verse eye), a masterfully employed word (often a verb) that animates the entire line, hence providing a focal point (thematic table of contents 4.2). The characters *bao* (enwrap) and *han* (hold) imply a gentle hold that is appropriate to the handling of delicate new growth. The verbs *xi* (sport) and *nong* (play with) render the subjects dynamic: seagulls are not merely seeking food on the vernal shore, ascending and descending according to the tides carrying their bounty, but sporting with it; pheasants are not simply brushing the temperate wind, flapping their wings as if to take flight, but playing with it. It is little wonder that critics have long marveled at Xie's use of verse eyes in his landscape poems, which ingeniously enliven the scenes described.

In addition to actual landscapes, symbolic ones in some cases may become the site for meditations on the way of life. In "Climbing the Lakeside Tower," the binary of retirement versus service underlies the entire poem:

## C6.7

Climbing the Lakeside Tower		登池上樓	(dēng chí shàng lóu)
	A submerged dragon entices with mysterious charms,	潛虬媚幽姿	(qián qiú mèi yōu zī)
2	The flying goose echoes its far-off cries.	飛鴻響遠音	(fēi hóng xiǎng yuǎn yīn)
	Reaching toward the sky, I am humbled by the floater in the clouds,	薄霄愧雲浮	(bó xiāo kuì yún fú)
4	Resting by the river, I am shamed by the dweller in the depths.	棲川作淵沉	(qī chuān zuò yuān chén)
	My stupidity made me unfit to advance in virtue,	進德智所拙	(jìn dé zhì suǒ zhuō)
6	My weakness made me unable to retire to the plow.	退耕力不任	(tuì gēng lì bù rèn)
	In pursuing a salary, I came to this ocean frontier, <sup>17</sup>	徇祿反窮海	(xún lù fǎn qióng hǎi)
8	Now ill, I lie facing the empty forest.	臥病對空林	(wò ē duì kōng lín)
	With quilt and pillow, I was blind to the season's signs,	衾枕昧節候	(qīn zhěn mèi jié hòu)
10	I raised my curtain, and peered out for a while.	褰開暫窺臨	(qiān kāi zàn kuī lín)
	I tilt my ears to listen to the billowing waves,	傾耳聆波瀾	(qīng ěr líng bō lán)
12	I lift my eyes to gaze at the steep mountains.	舉目眺嵒嶽	(jǔ mù tiào qū qín)
	Early spring transforms the lingering winds,	初景革緒風	(chū jǐng gé xù fēng)
14	New sunlight transfigures the shadows of old.	新陽改故陰	(xīn yáng gǎi gù yīn)
	The pond's banks grow spring grasses,	池塘生春草	(chí táng shēng chūn cǎo)
16	And garden willows have transformed the singing birds.	園柳變鳴禽	(yuán liǔ biàn míng qín)
	So dense! I am grieved by the song of Bin,	祁祁傷幽歌	(qí qí shāng yōu gē)
18	So luxuriant! I am stirred by the tune of Chu.	萋萋感楚吟	(qī qī gǎn chǔ yín)
	In living apart, one easily feels the length of time,	索居易永久	(suǒ jū yì yǒng jiǔ)
20	Away from the crowd, it is hard to settle the mind.	離群難處心	(lí qún nán chǔ xīn)
	Holding on to principle is not only of old,	持操豈獨古	(chí cāo qǐ dú gǔ)
22	That I am without regret is proven today.	無悶微在今	(wú mèn zhēng zài jīn)

[XLYJJZ, 63–64]

This poem contains two types of landscape: a symbolic one of lines 1–6 and a perceived one of lines 11–16. In the first part of the poem, the poet reflects on the issue of service versus withdrawal, without apparent resolution. This introspection is soon replaced by outward observation of the early-spring scene. The poet's engagement with nature brings about new reflections and a resolution. Lines 17–20 reveal the uneasy feelings of the poet regarding his exile from court. The poet is grieved by the song of Bin (*Shijing*, Mao no. 154), in which a girl longs to find a mate and go home with him, just as Xie longs to return home; he is also moved by the song of Chu that summons the recluse from the mountains. Although the poet admits the difficulty of steadying the mind in seclusion, he finally decides to maintain his principle and embrace quietude.

Three allusions to the *Yijing* develop the main theme of the poem. These allusions do not occupy a pivotal position in the poem, bridging the passage from natural scenes to inner transformation, as in "Climbing



Yongjia's Green Crag Mountain," or preceding a transformed landscape and subsequent inner meditations, as in "What I Observed as I Crossed the Lake." Rather, they are employed to set up and answer the dilemma of retirement versus service. Line 1 of the poem alludes to the First Yang of the hexagram *Qian* (Pure Yang): "A submerged dragon does not act."<sup>18</sup> This statement applies to the superior man who has yet to reveal his virtue and capabilities. Line 2 calls to mind the hexagram *Jian* (Gradual Progress), whose six statements outline the gradual advancement of the wild goose, from shore to highland to hill.<sup>19</sup> This ascension parallels the rise of the superior man.<sup>20</sup> The juxtaposition of retired life and successful career in lines 1 and 2 sets up a pattern of binary oppositions within the next four lines. In lines 3 and 5, the poet addresses the allusion to the flying goose by stating that he has failed in court life. Lines 4 and 6 hark back to the allusion of the submerged dragon as the poet admits that he has also not succeeded in retirement. The first two allusions resonate through the poem's first six lines and help build a microstructure for the first three couplets: images, significations of the images, and the application of the images to the poet's own situation.

The allusions in the first couplet work additionally with the poem's last line to give the poem a closed, circular structure. The last line alludes to the following comments in the *Yijing*, which explain the passage to which line 1 refers: "'A submerged dragon does not act.' What does this mean? The Master says: 'This refers to one who has a dragon's virtue yet remains hidden. He neither changes to suit the world nor seeks fulfillment in fame. He hides from the world but does not regret it, and though this fails to win approval, he is not sad [*wu men*].'"<sup>21</sup> The poet's comparison of the hidden dragon whose virtue is out of tune with the world to his own plight is as much a final consolation as an affirmation of his decision to withdraw, if only temporarily. By reinforcing the first line of the poem, the last line offsets the perfect balance between retirement and officialdom introduced in lines 1–6 and developed throughout the poem: the observation of spring scenes while in retirement in lines 11–16 and the lamentation of frustrated ambition in lines 17–20.

The presentation of the natural scene in lines 11–16 contains a number of distinguishing formal features of Xie's landscape poetry. The familiar pairing of mountains and waters combines with a pairing of sight and sound: the poet listens and observes a scene containing both water and mountain, which suggests a comprehensive engagement with nature. His perception of the mountains in line 12 is conveyed both visually and



auditorily: the use of the characters *qu* and *qin*, which have the same radical, *shan*, creates a visual continuity with variation, resembling a mountain ridge. The alliteration of *qu* and *qin* presents variation within similarity, suggesting a notable texture or unevenness, as in a mountain range. Remarkably, the elements of opposition and variation in these lines are smoothly integrated into a coherent visual sequence: attention proceeds from the distant seas, the nearer mountains, to the pond and trees next to the tower.

The most interesting couplet in this poem (and the most often quoted of Xie's oeuvre) is: "The pond's banks grow spring grasses, / And garden willows have transformed the singing birds." These lines brilliantly convey the look and feel of spring: the pond's banks give birth to spring grasses, while the willows in their vernal look transform the attitude of the birds that sing there. This couplet, with an apparently disarming simplicity, appears refreshingly spontaneous in a poem laden with symbols, allusions, alliteration, and complex phrases. The popular story about its origin would support the view that an impression of natural beauty is the object of the couplet: Xie dozed off after having worked for days on the lines of his poem. He then dreamed of his cousin Xie Huilian (397–433), also a famous poet, and awoke with these two lines, later crediting them to divine inspiration rather than to his own language. This is only a tale, but it reveals an admiration for spontaneity (even in artful lines) rather than obvious effort in Chinese aesthetics. The spontaneous nature of the couplet is wonderfully problematized by its compressed syntax, which yields a certain ambiguity to its meaning. My translation merely offers the neatest interpretation, but the couplet has also been rendered as, "Upon the pool, spring grass is growing, / The garden willows have changed into singing birds."<sup>22</sup> In this interpretation, the garden willows seem to have turned into singing birds, which populate the trees and fill them with sound. Xie may well have had this poetic image in mind, but one wonders about the replacement of willows by birds, which causes the former to disappear from the picture and privileges the aural over the visual. This spring scene surely needs the copresence of birds and willows. This translation moreover ignores the lines' parallel relationship. The relationship among the components in each line (the subjects, verbs, and objects they act on) is usually assumed to be parallel in a parallel couplet. Yet another translation, more mindful of their parallel relationship, reads: "The pond is growing into springtime plants / Garden willows have turned into singing birds."<sup>23</sup> The interpretation of *sheng* as

“grow into” stretches the semantic range of the word even more than a reading of *bian* as “turn into”; hence, this translation was explicitly presented as a poetic reading of the lines. The poeticalness of this couplet, however, derives less from an unusual usage of verbs than their ingenious choice and part in the syntactic composition. As verse eyes, the two verbs not only animate their lines but play with signs of the season (pond, grasses, trees, and birds) in a way that truly captures the mood of early spring. Although earlier readers have been fond of commenting on the apparent simplicity of these lines, what has continued to captivate readers is their surprising ambiguity.

Xie’s landscape poetry is marked by certain formal characteristics, such as verisimilar description, abundant use of allusions, animating verse eyes, and difficult phrasing, and by a conceptual feature, the poet’s contemplative engagement with a signifying nature. His extensive use of the *Yijing* is part of both his reading and his representation of nature. Later writers in the genre, which was popular in the Six Dynasties and peaked during the Tang, did not necessarily adopt Xie’s stylistic form and conceptual framework in their entirety, adapting the genre according to their individual styles. But vivid descriptions of the landscape and meditations on nature, its workings, and their relevance to one’s view of life remain constant markers of the genre. The culmination of the development of landscape poetry coincided with that of farmstead poetry during the High Tang, whose poets, in exploring the basic spirit shared by the two traditions—a return to nature and simplicity—brought the two genres into close affiliation by synthesizing aspects of both Tao and Xie in their examples of nature poetry.

Wendy Swartz

#### NOTES

1. Tao Qian, “A Lament in the Chu Mode: To Show to Recorder Pang and Scribe Deng,” in *Tao Yuanming ji jiaojian* (*The Works of Tao Yuanming* [TaoQian], with Collations and Notes), ed. Gong Bin (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1999), 98.

2. Most modern scholars have emended the text to read “thirteen years” (*shisan nian*), which is based on the traditional belief that Tao entered officialdom in 393 and retired in 405. Some scholars prefer to keep “thirty years” (*sanshi nian*), as it indicates the span of time covering Tao’s preparation for and tenure in office, from the age of ten to forty.

3. The late Six Dynasties critic Zhong Rong cites this contemporary assessment in the entry on Tao Qian in *Shipin jizhu* (*Collected Annotations of the “Grading of Poets”*), ed. Cao Xu (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1994), 260.

4. Ge Xiaoyin, *Shanshui tianyuan shipai yanjiu* (*Research on Schools of Landscape and Farmstead Poetry*) (Shenyang: Liaoning daxue chubanshe, 1993), 80.

5. Wang Wei’s “At My Wang River Retreat, Presented to Candidate Pei Di,” contains the

following couplet: “At the ford lingers the setting sun, / From the small village rises one wisp of smoke” (*Quan Tang shi* [Complete Shi Poetry of the Tang] [Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960], 126.1266). The visual dynamics created by the downward and upward movements of the setting sun and the rising smoke against the horizontal planes of the river and the village indicate a concern with the balance of forms that is an unmistakable mark of Wang Wei’s craftsmanship.

6. These three passages are (1) “The Great Way is not named; Great Discriminations are not spoken” (“Discussion on Making All Things Equal”); (2) “Those who know do not speak; those who speak do not know. Therefore the sage practices the teaching that has no words” (“Knowledge Wandered North”); and (3) “Zhuangzi says, ‘Words exist because of meaning; once you’ve gotten the meaning, you can forget the words’” (“External Things”) (*The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, trans. Burton Watson [New York: Columbia University Press, 1968], 44, 235, 302).

7. Su Shi, “Ti Yuanming ‘Yinjiu shi’ hou” (On Yuanming’s “Poems on Drinking Wine”), in *Su Shi wenji* (*The Collected Prose of Su Shi*) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986), 67.2092.

8. Wang Guowei, *Renjian cihua, Renjian ci zhuping* (“Remarks on Lyrics in the Human World, Lyrics in the Human World,” *Annotated and Evaluated*), ed. Chen Hongxiang (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 2002), 7.

9. Xiao Tong, “Tao Yuanming ji xu” (Preface to the *Collected Works of Tao Yuanming*), in *Quan Liang wen* (*Complete Liang Prose*), in *Quan Shanggu Sandai Qin Han Sanguo Liuchao wen* (*Complete Prose of the Three Ancient Dynasties, Qin, Han, Three Kingdoms, and Six Dynasties*) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1958), 20.3067a.

10. According to Wang Yao, by the Wei dynasty drinking had become a means for the gentry to escape from cruel political reality (*Zhonggu wenxueshi lun* [Essays on Medieval Literary History] [Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1998], 172–180). The transition from the Wei to the Jin was marked by great instability, during which expressions of opinion or position were terribly unsafe. Drinking and drunkenness were used most notably by the Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove as a defensive guise, as well as anesthesia for their sorrow over the contemporary state of affairs.

11. *The Poetry of T’ao Ch’ien*, trans. James R. Hightower (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 75.

12. Liu Xie, *Wenxin diaolong zhu shi* (“*The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*,” *Annotated and Explicated*), ed. Zhou Zhenfu (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1998), 49.

13. Wang Yao, *Zhonggu wenxueshi lun*, 271.

14. Wang Yao, *Zhonggu wenxueshi lun*, 272.

15. Richard Wilhelm and Cary F. Baynes, trans., *The I Ching, or Book of Changes*, Bollingen Series 19 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1967), 78. “Top Yang” refers to a solid (*yang*—) line at the top of the hexagram, which is composed of six solid and/or broken (*yin* --) lines.

16. Richard John Lynn, trans., *The Classic of Changes: A New Translation of the I Ching as Interpreted by Wang Bi* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 201.

17. I have interpreted this line with the Song variant for *fan* (to return), *ji* (to arrive at), in mind. Scholars generally do not alter the text, but note that *ji* makes more sense inasmuch as Xie was a native of Guiji, not Yongjia Commandery, where the poem was composed.

18. Lynn, *Classic of Changes*, 132. “First Yang” refers to a solid (*yang*—) line at the bottom of the hexagram.

19. Wilhelm and Baynes, *I Ching*, 208.

20. Lynn, *Classic of Changes*, 473–477.

21. Lynn, *Classic of Changes*, 132.

22. J. D. Frodsham, *The Murmuring Stream: The Life and Works of the Chinese Nature Poet Hsieh Ling-yün (385–433)*, *Duke of K’ang-Lo* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1967), 1:121.

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## Pentasyllabic *Shi* Poetry

### New Topics

The period from the second half of the fifth century to the first half of the sixth century in many ways represents a watershed in the evolution of classical Chinese poetry. During the Yongming reign (483–493) in the Qi dynasty (479–502), a group of poets devoted themselves to creating euphony by balancing the tones of Middle Chinese prosody. Although not universally followed in their own time, the rules they devised, honored and perfected by Tang dynasty poets, became the basis of so-called regulated verse (*lǔshi*) and exerted an enormous influence on later Chinese poetry. One of the initiators of prosodic innovation was **Xie Tiao** (464–499), an aristocrat whose life was cut short at age thirty-five by his refusal to participate in a palace coup.

The changes that occurred in classical Chinese poetry, however, went far beyond tonal euphony. During the long and peaceful rule of Liang Wudi (Emperor Wu of the Liang [r. 502–549]), a devout Buddhist, southern China witnessed an age of splendid cultural achievements with unprecedented literary and religious activities. The literary salon of Crown Prince Xiao Gang (503–551) was the site of an altogether new poetry, named *gongti shi* (palace-style poetry) after the Eastern Palace, the official residence of the crown prince. Denounced by Confucian moralists as decadent and often mistakenly described as a poetry dedicated to the portrayal of court ladies and romantic love, it was, in fact, a poetry informed by a Buddhist vision of the illusory nature of the material world and characterized by a prolonged, focused, and illuminating gaze at physical reality.

Xiao Gang, also known as Emperor Jianwen of the Liang (r. 549–551),

was probably one of the most underestimated and misunderstood classical Chinese poets. He spent most of his youthful years as regional governor and was appointed crown prince in 531. In 548 Hou Jing, a northern general who had defected to the Liang, turned on his benefactors and, in the following year, captured the Liang capital. Emperor Wu of the Liang died shortly thereafter, and Xiao Gang ruled for two years as a puppet emperor under Hou Jing before being murdered by Hou Jing's men. **Yu Xin** (513–581), the most famous member of Xiao Gang's salon, spent the second half of his life in the north after the south had been devastated by the Hou Jing Rebellion.

## XIE TIAO

Belonging to the same illustrious clan as the famous landscape poet **Xie Lingyun** (385–433), Xie Tiao nevertheless achieved a completely different style from that of his senior and had a more visible impact on the development of the regulated verse of the Tang.

### C7.1

#### An Outing to the Eastern Field

	Despondent, suffering from lack of cheer,	戚戚苦無悰 (qī qī kǔ wú cōng)
2	We go out for pleasure, hand in hand.	攜手共行樂 (xié shǒu gòng xíng lè)
	Seeking clouds, we ascend a tiered kiosk;	尋雲陟累榭 (xún yún zhì lěi xiè)
4	Following the hills, we gaze at the mushroom- like pavilions.	隨山望菌閣 (suí shān wàng jūn gé)
	Distant trees are hazy in their luxuriance;	遠樹曖芊芊 (yuǎn shù ài qiān qiān)
6	A mist rises, spreading in billows.	生煙紛漠漠 (shēng yān fēn mò mò)
	Where fish sport, new lotuses stir;	魚戲新荷動 (yú xì xīn hé dòng)
8	As birds scatter, remaining flowers fall.	鳥散餘花落 (niǎo sàn yú huā luò)
	If not facing the fragrant spring ale,	不對芳春酒 (bú duì fāng chūn jiǔ)
10	We shall gaze at villages in the blue hills instead.	還望青山郭 (huán wàng qīng shān guō)

[XQHWJNBCS 2:1425]

Less dense in diction than the works of his Liu Song predecessors, Xie Tiao's poems often flow with an easy grace. Although still far from Tang regulated verse, "An Outing to the Eastern Field" comes close in terms of its brevity (ten lines as opposed to the sixteen or twenty lines of an

average Xie Lingyun poem) and its attention to tonal euphony. The third couplet, for instance, is a perfect example of tonal patterning, with deflected and level tones alternating in the key positions in the first line of the couplet (second and fourth characters) and then level and deflected tones used in the corresponding positions in the following line.

The pleasurable outing is set against a background of mysterious melancholy—the poet never tells us what it is that makes him despondent. The Eastern Field was at the foot of Zhong Mountain, where Crown Prince Wenhui (458–493) of the Qi had constructed a luxury villa. Xie Tiao himself was said to have owned a villa in the same area. The poet claims that he and his friend ascend the lofty terrace to seek clouds, but once they climb to the top, a mist rises and spreads everywhere; along with the lushly growing trees, it blocks the poet's view of the distant vista.

Perhaps because of the obstruction of his view, the poet, in the fourth couplet, turns his eyes to a scene close at hand. The new growth of the lotus leaves indicates the season: it is early summer. The stirring of the new lotus leaves leads the poet to notice the playing fish; the “sport” of the fish, a symbol of marital happiness and fertility, is imbued with sexual undertones. The liveliness and vitality of nature are, however, soon offset by a scene of dispersal and destruction. Following the principle of the parallel couplet, which demands that the reader understand the second line of a couplet in the same way as the first line, we are able to construct the causal relationship between the scattering of the birds and the falling of the blossoms from the tree; that is, it is the movement of the birds that shakes the flowers off the branches, and it is most likely the human presence—the approach of the poet and his friend—that has startled the birds. The flowers are mere remnants of their former splendor (and as such, fall easily): as summer begins and lotus grows, spring is coming to an end, and tree blossoms are fading away. Even as the fish are mating and the lotuses are sprouting new leaves, there are withering and death. Or, if we turn the argument around, nature is ever renewing itself, and there is always new life (the tree will blossom again next year)—not so, however, for human beings.

Moved by the cycle of nature he observes, the poet thinks of drinking spring ale, a gesture reminiscent of “Duan ge xing” (Short Song) by the Jian'an poet **Cao Cao** (155–220): “Facing the ale, one should sing, / How long does human life last?” Thoughts of mortality and the impermanence of things may have initially driven the poet out to make merry on a fine

late-spring day, but nature turns out to be not so much a consolation as a reminder of the brevity of human life. While it is the poet's vision that connects all the things in nature and makes them into self-contained scenes in well-crafted couplets, there is an irreconcilable difference between man and nature that marks the human presence in the landscape as essentially alien. All that is left for the poet to do is to “gaze” (*wang*) from a distance, to be an onlooker able to appreciate but unable to participate in nature's cycle of renewal.

The fourth couplet in Xie Tiao's “An Outing to the Eastern Field” is a well-known parallel couplet in Chinese literary history. Its force comes from an intricacy that goes well beyond prosodic or formal perfection. It says much in a limited space, and what it says depends very much on how it is said.

## C7.2

### Jade Stairs Resentment

In the evening hall, the bead curtain is lowered;  
Drifting glowworms fly, then rest.  
Through the long night, sewing a gossamer dress:  
This longing for you—when will it ever cease?

玉階怨	(yù jiē yuàn)
夕殿下珠簾	(xī diàn xià zhū lián)
流螢飛復息	(liú yíng fēi fù xī)
長夜縫羅衣	(cháng yè féng luó yī)
思君此何極	(sī jūn cǐ hé jí)

[XQHWJNBCS 2:1420]

“Jade Stairs Resentment” (also translated as “Lament of the Jade Stairs” [C10.10]) is a quatrain (*jueju*), a verse form that had grown increasingly popular in the fifth to sixth centuries. Quatrains could be written in either five-or seven-syllable lines, although the full development of the seven-syllable quatrain occurred only in the Tang. There are several theories regarding the origin of *jueju*, one of which is based on the literal meaning of *jue*: “cut-off.” According to this theory, poets used to compose quatrains in response to one another, but when a quatrain received no response, it became “cut-off lines,” or *jueju*. During the Southern Dynasties, poets were fascinated with quatrain songs performed at court; these songs, although commonly regarded as folk songs, were often composed by court musicians as well as by aristocrats—sometimes the emperor himself. Xie Tiao's quatrain, written to a *yuefu* title, was much more decorous than many of the quatrain songs in the court music repertoire, but it nonetheless belonged to such a tradition.



“Jade Stairs Resentment” describes a woman yearning for her absent beloved. Everything points to her loneliness: the lowering of the bead curtain implies that no one is coming and she is ready to retire, the flying and resting of the glowworms denote the passage of time, and the sewing of clothes through night suggests sleeplessness. Everything becomes a sign of something else that is kept well hidden, just like the resentment (*yuan*) of the woman. In lines 1–3 of the poem, the only word that might suggest the woman’s feelings is the term modifying “night,” which she perceives as “long.” This subjective sense of “long” prepares the reader for the last line, which breaks into a rhetorical question: “This longing for you—when will it ever cease?” The emotional power of the ending is very much intensified by the holding back of the first three lines.

For the informed reader, there is much more to the poem. In ancient Chinese lore, glowworms were believed to be produced by rotten grass—an indication that the lady’s courtyard is overgrown with weeds, yet another sign of her having no visitor. Since glowworms generally appear in late summer, their inclusion in the poem also functions as a marker of the season; autumn is a time not only of cooling passions but also of decay. Her resentment (*yuan*) of the absent lover is, therefore, strengthened by this subtle reminder of the brevity of youth, beauty, and human life itself. The larger temporal background, however, invests her sewing with a sense of irony: it is, after all, not a piece of warm clothing for the approaching cold weather but a “gossamer dress” appropriate only for summer. Does this anachronistic gesture bespeak a desperate desire to prolong the summer days? Or, as the ancient saying goes: “A woman adorns herself for the one who loves her.” Is she cherishing the hope that one day her beloved will return and that she will wear the dress for him? Or does the line suggest that she is soon to be put away like the gauze dress? In this quatrain, we hear the echo of a *yuefu* poem attributed to Lady Ban (ca. first century B.C.E.), in which a gossamer fan worries that it will be discarded once the cold season arrives. These interpretations do not necessarily exclude one another but altogether contribute to the richness of the image of sewing.

Xie Tiao’s poem exemplifies one particularly desirable quality for a quatrain, which is the use of simple language to create a world of complex nuances. Although one may still detect Xie Lingyun’s influence in some of Xie Tiao’s landscape poems, on the whole Xie Tiao’s poetry is characterized by a refined elegance that differs remarkably from Xie Lingyun’s exuberant density. Xie Tiao was one of the most revered poets

in the early sixth century; his graceful, measured expression of feelings in simple, clear diction became the new poetic ideal for the court poets of the Liang dynasty (502–557).

## XIAO GANG

The major theme of Xiao Gang's poetry is transience. It is a Buddhist theme, but it is also a universally human one. To identify the major theme of Xiao Gang's poetry as transience does not mean that Xiao Gang was always writing about the impermanence of human life; it means simply that he was intensely concerned with moments: his poetry uses words to arrest fleeting moments in the flow of time. It was perhaps for this reason that he was so taken by shadows and wrote about shadows so often in his poetry, as shadow marks a specific time of day, a particular moment. By portraying the world in terms of moments, Xiao Gang represented both its fragility and its aliveness. Many critics have accused Xiao Gang of being too delicate; in a gendered distinction of qualities, delicacy still suggests femininity, a quality considered unseemly in a man and doubly suspicious in a ruler. Such a view, however, mistakes an extraordinary power of observation for mere delicacy. In the end, the delicacy of Xiao Gang's poems is no more than an extension of the vibrant and ephemeral world depicted in them.

### C7.3

Autumn Evening		秋晚	(qiū wǎn)
	Drifting clouds emerge from the eastern peaks;	浮雲出東嶺	(fú yún chū dōng lǐng)
2	In the west the sun descends to the river.	落日下西江	(luò rì xià xī jiāng)
	Hastening shadows stretch across and darken the walls;	促陰橫隱壁	(cù yīn héng yǐn bì)
4	Lengthened rays obliquely penetrate the window.	長暉斜度窓	(cháng huī xié dù chuāng)
	Tangled clouds, glowing red, are made circular by the clear water;	亂霞圓綠水	(luàn xiá yuán lǜ shuǐ)
6	Tiny leaves outlined by a lamp in the air.	細葉影飛缸	(xì yè yǐng fēi gāng)

[XQHWJNBCS 3:1947]

“Autumn Evening” depicts a particular time of the year and a particular time of the day. Both autumn and twilight are times of division as well as of transition and ambiguity: the heat of summer has not quite turned into the cold of winter; the day has ceased to be day, but the night has not

quite begun. In the west, the sun is setting; in the east, where the moon should be, drifting clouds are pouring out from the mountains. Even as the last rays of the sun penetrate the window, shadows are gradually spreading over the walls, and darkness is closing in from all sides.

In the gathering darkness, two sources of light catch the poet's attention. The tangled clouds, glowing with the red of sunset, are reflected in a circular pool, shining forth with a momentary splendor. The circularity of the pool also gives the tangled clouds a shape—a roundness that, in Buddhism, indicates perfection, be it the perfection of the Buddhist teachings or of enlightenment. In the next line, we see another light source: lamps are lit, which indicates the increasing density of the dark. The poet notices the dark silhouettes of tiny tree leaves outlined by the lamplight. Thus, in a world gradually sinking into shadows, the poet traces luminous patterns and forms, affirming an order created by human effort.

In these lines, we can see a peculiar vision of the world—and a peculiar way in which poetry is made to work. We may compare Xiao Gang's fragmentary poem with couplets by previous masters, such as the couplet from "Zeng Wang Can" (To Wang Can), a poem by **Cao Zhi** (192–232):

Trees are blooming in spring splendor;  
The clear pool stirs long currents.

樹木發春華 (shù mù fā chūn huá)  
清池激長流 (qīng chí jī cháng liú)

[XQHWJNBCS 1:451]

or the couplet from Xie Lingyun's poem "Written upon Returning over the Lake from My Meditation Lodge at Stone Cliff":

Forests and ravines gather in the dusk colors,  
Clouds and vapors draw back their sunset haze.

林壑斂暝色 (lín huò liǎn míng sè)  
雲霞收夕霏 (yún xiá shōu xī fēi)

[XQHWJNBCS 2:1165]

These couplets, although no less beautiful or poetic, are clearly of a different kind from Xiao Gang's couplets, as they are more straightforward, more linear in their movement. In Xiao Gang's poem, even the first couplet, which is the simplest of the three in its movement, requires a going back in reading for us to better grasp the picture, for we would not understand the significance of the clouds in the eastern sky until we are told that the sun has sunk to the river's level in the west; only

then do we realize that darkness is all around. The poem represents a moment when, at a time of decreasing visibility, vision is focused on even the smallest change in nature, and as a result, nature becomes illuminated, just as the lamplight delineates the dark shape of the tiny autumn leaves.

Another poem, “Evening Sun in the Rear Hall,” again opens with the movement of shadows:

## C7.4

### Evening Sun in the Rear Hall

	The shade of curtains passes across the emerald stairs;	幔陰通碧砌	(màn yīn tōng bì qì)
2	The sun-shadow crosses the corner of the city wall.	日影度城隅	(rì yǐng dù chéng yú)
	Willows on the bank droop long leaves;	岸柳垂長葉	(àn liǔ chuí cháng yè)
4	Peach blossoms by the window shed delicate calyxes.	窗桃落細跗	(chuāng táo luò xì fū)
	A flower retains the butterfly’s powder;	花留蛺蝶粉	(huā liú jiá dié fěn)
6	Bamboo conceals dragonfly pearls.	竹翳蜻蜓珠	(zhú yì qīng tíng zhū)
	There is no understanding friend to share with—	賞心無與共	(shǎng xīn wú yǔ gòng)
8	Moistening the brush, I linger alone.	染翰獨踟躕	(rǎn hàn dú zhí zhú)

[XQHWJNBCS 3:1955]

The “emerald stairs,” which are actually seen by the poet, and the remote corner of the city wall, which can only be imagined by the poet because he is in the rear hall, are linked by shifting shadows: just as the sun moves across the sky, so the shadows move across the earth. From this point on, the boundary between what is seen by the bodily eye and what is seen by the mind’s eye becomes blurred. “Willows on the bank” of a river, a distant scene, are juxtaposed with the “peach blossoms by the window,” a scene close at hand. Indeed, the poet is so close to the peach blossoms that he can see the shedding of their delicate calyxes. This also reminds the reader that, just as the day is advancing, springtime is also coming to an end.

The third couplet again sets side by side an image grounded in empirical experience and a semi-imaginary scene. According to the *Bowu zhi* (*A Comprehensive Account of Things*), a work by the Western Jin writer Zhang Hua (232–300) that records many fantastic phenomena: “On the fifth day of the fifth month [that is, mid-to late June], if one buries the head of a dragonfly under a west-facing window, after three days of not eating anything, it will turn into a green pearl.” Now, if a butterfly

indeed has powder on its wings and may leave it on the flower petals, “dragonfly pearls” are no more than a figment of the poet’s imagination. Moreover, he claims that they are concealed by the growing bamboo, so that this fantastic image is negated as soon as it is evoked, and the reader is left wondering if that which is being concealed is actually there.

But even if it might be empirically true that a butterfly stains a flower with its powder, is it visible to even the most perceptive human eyes? Much of what is depicted in this poem seems more the product of the poetic imagination than of even the most careful observation. In this poem, the act of looking and seeing is also the act of visualizing and creating. Perception becomes indistinguishable from representation. Precisely for this reason, it is difficult to find an appreciative friend to share the scene with, for the scene is as much real as imagined, and visualization is always a private, individual act. Sitting alone in the late afternoon—with time flying away in the shifting shadows of the sun, darkness approaching, and springtime ending—Xiao Gang finds that the only enjoyable activity is to write.

Xie Lingyun, the great landscape poet of the fifth century, had once famously said that a fine hour, beautiful scenery, an appreciative friend (*shangxin*), and an enjoyable activity were four things hard to come by all at once. Indeed, the desire for an appreciative friend is so prominent in Xie Lingyun’s poetry that it became his hallmark. Xiao Gang’s poem both pays tribute to the earlier master and demonstrates the immense difference that separates the two: while Xie Lingyun’s poetry often attempts to offer a panoramic view of the landscape and creates an impression of all-inclusiveness and a cosmic vision, Xiao Gang’s intense gaze is focused on a much smaller sphere, and he resorts to the mind’s eye no less than to his physical vision to detect and construct the complex relations existing among the myriad things of the world apparently all standing alone. As Stephen Owen has said, “His was a poetry of beautiful, enigmatic patterns, often drawing the eye closely to some detail.”<sup>1</sup>

Beginning in the Qi dynasty, ***yongwu shi*** (poetry on things) became increasingly popular. It gradually developed into an important subgenre of classical Chinese poetry, continually practiced throughout history and, in fact, enjoying a place in modern poetry as well. Of Xiao Gang’s extant poetic collection, which contains over 250 poems, about one-sixth belong to the *yongwu* category. The usual *yongwu* poem of the Qi describes the characteristics of a given object and often ends with an appraisal of how

the object may be of service to its human owner. As Cynthia Chennault has noted, “Instead of things that stand free in nature, the new trend of Southern Qi odes was to depict small decorative items which had incidental uses, such as musical instruments, utensils for a banquet, a lady’s toiletry articles, and so on.”<sup>2</sup> And yet, it is noteworthy that only one-fifth of the approximately forty *yongwu* poems by Xiao Gang are about inanimate objects. Xiao Gang was far more interested in portraying natural phenomena or living things, from clouds and rain to horses, birds, flowers, and insects. They are not depicted as static, inanimate, and generic, but as specific, particular, and vulnerable to the ravages of time.

“On Clouds” is a fine example of Xiao Gang’s *yongwu* poetry:

### C7.5

#### On Clouds

詠雲

(yǒng yún)

Floating clouds unfold in five colors—  
Carnelian shining against the frosty sky.  
Jade leaves scattering autumn shadows;  
Purple mist sent adrift by a metal wind.

浮雲舒五色  
瑪瑙映霜天  
玉葉散秋影  
金風飄紫煙

(fú yún shū wǔ sè)  
(mǎ nǎo yìng shuāng tiān)  
(yù yè sǎn qiū yǐng)  
(jīn fēng piāo zǐ yān)

[XQHWJNBCS 3:1953]

This poem shows Xiao Gang’s familiarity with the literary tradition and his ability to make it new. The first line evokes “Fuyun fu” (A Poetic Exposition on the Floating Clouds), by the Western Jin writer Lu Ji (261–303), in which he compares the clouds of “five colors” to lotus blossoms, rose of Sharon, agate, and carnelian. Lu Ji also describes the clouds as “jade leaves,” which are blown off “golden branches.” Noticeably, what Xiao Gang chooses to take from Lu Ji’s metaphors are not organic things of nature, such as lotus or rose of Sharon, but “carnelian” and “jade leaves,” to which he adds “a metal wind”—in Chinese cosmology, autumn is considered the season of metal, and so the autumn wind is also referred to as a “metal wind.” The result is striking, for the airy, constantly shifting forms of clouds are connected with the hard textures of minerals and metal. On the one hand, the poet uses words of insubstantiality, such as “floating,” “shadows,” and “mist”; on the other, those of solidity, like “carnelian,” “jade,” and “metal.” That the sky should be “frosty” intensifies the sense of coldness and hardness and accentuates the ethereality of the shape-changing clouds.

The clouds depicted in this quatrain are specifically autumn clouds. Real leaves wither and decay in autumn, but not these jade leaves. And yet, as the metal wind blows, even the jade leaves are scattered and turned into mere puff.

The jade leaves would have had a special resonance for Xiao Gang and his contemporaries, who grew up against an intensely Buddhist background, were devout Buddhist believers, and regularly attended Buddhist lectures. The Buddhist paradise, known as the Pure Land, is described as a land made of diamonds and decorated lavishly with the Seven Jewels, including agate, carnelian, jade, and gold (which, in Chinese, is the same word as “metal” [jin]). In the Pure Land, even trees are made of precious gems: of some trees, *The Sutra of the Buddha of Infinite Life* says the roots are made of diamonds, the trunks of gold, the branches of silver, the twigs of beryl, the leaves of lapis lazuli, the flowers of coral, and the fruits of red pearls; the sutra goes on and on in this manner. That trees should be made of various jewels might seem unnatural or artificial to some lay readers, and yet diamonds, silver, lapis lazuli, and coral are things of nature, as is organic vegetation. Being made of jewels only means that the trees in the Buddhist paradise do not wither and decay, as do trees in the mortal world; they are beyond the cycle of life and death. Xiao Gang was obviously fascinated by the blissful land sumptuously portrayed in the sutras. In another poem, “Xizhai xing ma” (Riding in the Western Residence), we see such a couplet:

Clouds open up like leaves of carnelian;	雲開瑪瑙葉 (yún kāi mǎ nǎo yè)
Transparent are waves of glass.	水淨琉璃波 (shuǐ jìng liú lí bō)

[XQHWJNBCS 3:1950]

Viewed in the Buddhist context, Xiao Gang’s poem “On Clouds” becomes poignant. As the illusory jade leaves are scattered by the autumn wind, we see the contrast between the solidity and permanence of the diamond land inhabited by heavenly beings and the fragility of the human world inhabited by the poet—and us.

Many of Xiao Gang’s poems are informed by his intimate knowledge of Buddhist texts. The following poem, “On a Fair Lady Viewing a Painting,” recalls the Buddhist story of the mutual deception of a carpenter and a painter. The carpenter played a practical joke on his painter friend by

making a wooden statue of a pretty girl, which the painter took to be real and fell in love with. Upon learning of his error, the painter decided to get back at the carpenter. He made a painting of his hanging himself, which looked so real that the carpenter was led to think that the painter had committed suicide. Terrified, the carpenter rushed to cut the rope—only to discover that it was an object in a painting. This story illustrates the fallacy of human perception and the unreal nature of the physical world. It is included in the *Jinglü yixiang* (*Differentiated Manifestations of Sutras and Laws*), a large Buddhist encyclopedia commissioned by Xiao Gang's father, Emperor Wu of the Liang, in 516.

## C7.6

### On a Fair Lady Viewing a Painting

	In the hall a portrait of a divine woman;	殿上圖神女 (diàn shàng tú shén nǚ)
2	From the palace emerges a fair lady.	宮裏出佳人 (gōng lǐ chū jiā rén)
	So lovely, both are painted;	可憐俱是畫 (kě lián jù shì huà)
4	Who could distinguish real from unreal?	誰能辨偽真 (shuí néng biàn wěi zhēn)
	Clearly both have bright eyes and neat brows;	分明淨眉眼 (fēn míng jìng méi yǎn)
6	Their slender waists are one and the same.	一種細腰身 (yì zhǒng xì yāo shēn)
	How do we separate the two?	所可持為異 (suǒ kě chí wéi yì)
8	One is always in good spirits.	長有好精神 (cháng yǒu hǎo jīng shén)

[XQHWJNBCS 3:1953]

In a rather humorous tone, Xiao Gang points out that both women—the one in the painting and the one viewing it—are “painted,” no doubt alluding to the court lady's heavy makeup. The last couplet, as Kang-i Sun Chang has observed, underlines the “permanent value of art”: only the painted woman is always in good spirits.<sup>3</sup> The modern reader may find it distasteful that Xiao Gang should treat the real woman as an object of art by comparing her to a painting; and yet, the contrast effectively brings out the vital energy and fragility of the human condition: unlike the painted beauty, the real woman may become sick, grow old, get angry or become sad, and easily lose her “good spirits,” which only a painted beauty is privileged to possess “always.” Indeed, for those who were saturated in Buddhist teachings and frequently attended Buddhist lectures, like the Liang royal family and members of the nobility, the very statement “One is always in good spirits” is tongue-in-cheek: painting is



one of the best-known metaphors in the Buddhist scriptures for the illusive nature of the phenomenal world, and so the “permanence” of a painting is itself an illusion because it is relative, measured against the brevity of human life.

Buddhist doctrine teaches that when a child sees the moon in the water, he tries to grab it, while the wise adult laughs at the child for doing so. The wiser adult understands that the impulse to grab the moon in the water is owing to the child’s adhering too much to the sense of “I” and that of “what I see” as reality. In fact, “I” is constituted of the Five Skandhas (*wuyin* or *wuyun*)—form, feeling, perception, impulse, and consciousness—all essentially illusory and transitory. Considered in this light, the following *yongwu* poem by Xiao Gang, “On a Lone Duck,” seems to take on a more complicated meaning, as the lonely duck, enamored of its own reflection, is sadly deluded in its attachment to something insubstantial and unreal:

### C7.7

#### On a Lone Duck

It dives in shallows for beakfuls of moss,  
Heads to sandy isles to preen its feathers.  
Ready to fly off all by itself,  
It finds its reflection and lingers.

詠單鳧	(yǒng dān fú)
銜苔入淺水	(xián tái rù qiǎn shuǐ)
刷羽向沙洲	(shuā yǔ xiàng shā zhōu)
孤飛本欲去	(gū fēi běn yù qù)
得影更淹留	(dé yǐng gèng yān liú)

[XQHWJNBCS 3:1973]

The last line contains an unsolvable paradox: the poet suggests that the discovery of its own reflection prompts the duck to stay, and yet, its staying conditions the existence of the reflection. The illusion of having a companion (that is, its own reflection in the water) gives rise to fond attachment, but the attachment itself turns out to be the *raison d’être* for the illusion and its preservation. Cause and effect become hopelessly entangled.

Two general points need to be made about the reception and evaluation of Xiao Gang’s achievements as a poet. First, modern critics tend to focus their attention on Xiao Gang’s poems about palace ladies and boudoir life, but these poems take up less than half of his extant oeuvre, and their preservation is due primarily to their inclusion in the sixth-century poetic anthology *Yutai xinyong* (*New Songs of the Jade*

*Terrace*), which was intended for an upper-class female readership. This is the only pre-Tang poetic anthology that has survived more or less intact to the present day. But when these poems are taken to represent the entire corpus of Xiao Gang's largely lost writings, we are prevented from seeing that he has a much wider range. Second, while the modern feminist critique of voyeurism may be applied to some of Xiao Gang's poems on women, it is worthwhile to remember that in appreciating the poetry of a different age, we should take its historical and cultural contexts into account. Xiao Gang lived in an intensely Buddhist era, and the key to understanding the larger significance of his poems is to remember that for Xiao Gang and his contemporaries, sensuous forms paradoxically bespoke the illusory, ephemeral nature of the phenomenal world. One of Xiao Gang's most notorious poems on a beautiful woman taking a daytime nap is, as some Chinese scholars have pointed out in recent years, clearly influenced by the long versified account of Śākyamuni Buddha's life (*Acts of the Buddha*), translated into Chinese by the monk Bao Yun (376?–449) in the fifth century. In the account, sleeping palace ladies remind Śākyamuni, who was then the crown prince just like Xiao Gang, that alluring forms of the physical world are but an illusion, and his determination to forsake the secular life is subsequently strengthened.

If we look beyond the conventional criticism of Xiao Gang either as a decadent prince indulging in sensuous pleasures or as a male chauvinist voyeur, we will notice some wonderful love poems in his collection, such as the quatrain "Returning to the South of the City from the Encampment." This quatrain was written when the young Xiao Gang was serving as the governor of Yongzhou (in modern Hubei Province) between 523 and 530, during which period he carried on several military campaigns against the Wei, the enemy dynasty in northern China.

## C7.8

### Returning to the South of the City from the Encampment

During temporary separation, both became apprehensive;  
But when the curtain opens, old memories return.  
It is as if we were never in love before;  
Indeed it is more like having just met.

從頓還城 (cóng dùn huán chéng nán)

暫別兩成疑 (zàn bié liǎng chéng yí)

開簾生舊憶 (kāi lián shēng jiù yì)

都如未有情 (dōu rú wèi yǒu qíng)

更似新相識 (gèng sì xīn xiāng shí)

[XQHWJNBCS 3:1969]

Like many of his contemporary poets, Xiao Gang was skillful at producing a vignette and sketching a dramatic situation. In this poem, the poet describes the reunion with his beloved, and he chooses to focus on the moment when the lovers first set eyes on each other after a temporary parting. During their separation, they have been tortured by suspicion and fear about the inconstancy of the beloved; now that they are together again, there is a moment of pause before they rush into each other's arms, a moment of hesitation, even abashment, before old memories revive and a new passion is awakened. Although the poem was written more than 1,500 years ago, the lovers' sentiments as portrayed in it are fresh and familiar, as if it had been composed only yesterday.

### YU XIN

Yu Xin grew up in the southern elite culture; his father, a famous poet, was one of Xiao Gang's closest companions, and Yu Xin himself had enjoyed Xiao Gang's favor and patronage. After the Hou Jing Rebellion, Yu Xin went to Jiangling (in modern Hubei) and served under Xiao Gang's younger brother, Xiao Yi (Emperor Yuan of the Liang [r. 552–555]). In 554, Yu Xin was sent on a diplomatic mission to Chang'an (modern Xi'an), the Western Wei (535–556) capital, and was subsequently detained. While Yu Xin was there, Jiangling fell to the Western Wei army; on January 27, 555, Emperor Yuan was brutally killed. Shortly afterward, the new Liang emperor was deposed by a powerful southern general, Chen Baxian (Emperor Wu of the Chen [r. 557–560]), who founded the Chen dynasty (557–589), the last of the Southern Dynasties. Yu Xin was never able to return to his native land. The Western Wei was soon overthrown and replaced by the Northern Zhou dynasty (557–581), and Yu Xin held a number of official positions under the new regime. He was treated with affection and respect by the Zhou princes, who loved poetry, but the poems of Yu Xin's later years are marked by sadness over the fate of the south and the Liang princes and by a profound sense of survivor's guilt.

Yu Xin was a consummate southern court poet, a master of elegant, restrained expression, which was the legacy of the fifth-century aristocratic poet Xie Tiao. In Yu Xin's later poems, the intricate parallelism developed by the Liang court poets is employed with a much simplified diction and an apparently casual ease, which, combined with his frequent

description of a bleak, sparse northern landscape in autumn and winter, convey a particular emotional force. Nevertheless, Yu Xin manages to frame the intensity of his feelings with a cultivated grace that is the hallmark of the southern courtier, and his poetry achieves powerful poignancy precisely because of such decorous restraint. Yu Xin's works not only became a model for the northern poets of the late sixth century, but also produced a far-reaching influence. **Du Fu** (712–770), the great Tang poet, was an admirer of Yu Xin and praised him in the following lines: “Yu Xin, all his life, was most forlorn: / In his old age, his poetry and rhapsodies moved rivers and passes.”

## C7.9

### A Cold Garden: On What I See

- A cold garden among dwellings like scattered stars,  
 2 In the little village, with leaves falling.  
 Painting of roaming immortals covering half a wall;  
 4 For the reclusive gentleman, a bed full of books.  
 In the winter month, the heart of the underground  
 spring is stirring;  
 6 The energy of the earth spreads with the mark of yang.  
 Snowflakes are several feet deep;  
 8 An icy riverbed, over a foot thick.  
 The dark hawk looks sideways at a pheasant;  
 10 A white egret observes the fish down below.  
 I am reflecting on how, outside the Eastern  
 Gate of the capital,  
 12 Various lords were seeing the Shus off.

寒園即目 (hán yuán jí mù)  
 寒園星散居 (hán yuán xīng sǎn jū)  
 搖落小村墟 (yáo luò xiǎo cūn xū)  
 遊仙半壁畫 (yóu xiān bàn bì huà)  
 隱士一牀書 (yǐn shì yì chuáng shū)  
 子月泉心動 (zǐ yuè quán xīn dòng)  
 陽爻地氣舒 (yáng yáo dì qì shū)  
 雪花深數尺 (xuě huā shēn shù chǐ)  
 冰牀厚尺餘 (bīng chuáng hòu chǐ yú)  
 蒼鷹斜望雉 (cāng yīng xié wàng zhì)  
 白鷺下觀魚 (bái lù xià guān yú)  
 更想東都外 (gèng xiǎng dōng dū wài)  
 羣公別二疏 (qún gōng bié èr shū)

[XQHWJNBCS 3:2377]

“A Cold Garden: On What I See” has a deceptive title, for the poet is depicting not only what he sees but also what he does not see: underneath the several feet of snow and a frozen riverbed that human vision cannot penetrate, the “underground spring” is stirring and the “energy of the earth” is spreading. This optimistic statement is immediately undercut by the next couplet: a “dark hawk” is circling in the sky, flying so low that the poet can tell it is looking sideways, and a “white egret” is also searching for food. These birds of prey are waiting patiently for the snow and ice to melt so they can strike their victims—the pheasant and fish now being protected by the thick coverings of nature.

The poet sees the movement of those creatures of prey and knows that it bears the sign of spring's imminent arrival; he also knows that with the return of spring, there will be bloodshed and death. The poet's thoughts turn to something beyond his garden: another time, another place, when the noble lords of the Western Han took leave of the two Shus—Shu Guang and Shu Shou (fl. first century B.C.E.)—the two imperial tutors who retired at the summit of their careers and were upheld as role models in “getting out before it was too late.”

The peaceful, erudite indoor pleasures—the walls painted with “roaming immortals,” the books in bed—are thus enclosed in a cold wintry landscape beset by lurking dangers, murderous plots, and small deaths. Nature is neither at peace nor in harmony; it is populated with creatures of prey and victims. The poet's little house may be safe and warm, as opposed to the cold and harsh world outside, but he cannot help thinking warily of the arrival of springtime—a rare moment in Six Dynasties poetry indeed, when spring becomes so threatening and ominous. In the last couplet, the natural world and the social world are brought together in the poet's mind: Yu Xin seems to be entertaining the possibility of withdrawing from public service like the two Shus. He is, in truth, reflecting on an escape route for himself, who is at the moment both protected and trapped, like a pheasant or a fish, by the deep snow and ice.

Yu Xin uses almost no allusions in the whole poem, except for a reference to the two Shus in the last couplet. And yet, the white egret observing the fish echoes a well-known story about **Zhuangzi**, in which the ancient philosopher Zhuangzi and his friend Hui Shi look at the fish swimming in the water and hold a famous discussion about “whether one knows if the fish are happy.” The irony here, of course, is how the fish might be swimming happily under the ice while completely ignorant of their menacing observer and the danger they face.

The political situation in the Northern Zhou court toward the last years of Yu Xin's life was indeed unstable, as the ambitious minister **Yang Jian** (Emperor Wen of the Sui [r. 581–604]) garnered all power into his own hands. In 579, Yu Xin retired because of illness. In the following year, several of his former imperial patrons, including the prince of Teng, who had written a preface to Yu Xin's collection of literary writings, were executed on Yang Jian's orders. In 581, Yang Jian forced the abdication of the last Northern Zhou emperor and established the Sui dynasty (581–618).

In the autumn of 581, the Sui emperor commanded a military campaign against the Chen dynasty in the south. Yu Xin's friend Liu Zhen (d. 598), who had also served under the Liang in his youth, was sent along as the commander-in-chief's secretary. The following quatrain, "In Response to Director Liu Zhen," was apparently composed on this occasion. If so, it would have been one of Yu Xin's last datable poems, for he died soon afterward in the same year.

In this quatrain of twenty characters, there are two place-names (which take up one-fourth of the poem): Guangling and the Fortress of the Shooting Star. The Fortress of the Shooting Star was to the west of Jiankang (modern Nanjing), the capital of the Liang, where Yu Xin had spent most of his youthful years. Guangling (modern Yangzhou) is located just to the north of the Yangtze River, very close to Jiankang. It had been conquered by the Zhou army two years earlier. Yu Xin, an old man now, did not take part in the military campaign undertaken in 581, and his description of Guangling and the Fortress of the Shooting Star was, as indicated by the title of the poem, imagined from his friend Liu Zhen's perspective:

### C7.10

#### In Response to Director Liu Zhen

To the south I climbed the bank of Guangling,  
And turned my head toward the Fortress of the  
Shooting Star.  
Who would have thought of facing the former  
shore again  
Only to see beacon fires illuminating the River?

和劉儀同臻 (hè liú yí tóng zhēn)

南登廣陵岸 (nán dēng guǎng líng àn)

迴首落星城 (huí shǒu luò xīng chéng)

不言臨舊浦 (bù yán lín jiù pǔ)

烽火照江明 (fēng huǒ zhào jiāng míng)

[XQHWJNBCS 3:2401]

The first two lines are directly taken from a well-known poem, "Qi ai" (Seven Sorrows), written by **Wang Can** (177–217). In 192, Wang Can was forced to flee the western capital Chang'an and go to the south during the chaos of the civil war. On his way there, he observed the devastation caused by years of fighting; before going on, he turned back and looked at the once prosperous metropolis once more:

To the south I climbed the slope of Ba Mound  
and turned my head to gaze on Chang'an.

And I understood why someone wrote “Falling Stream”—  
I gasped and felt that pain within.<sup>4</sup>

Ba Mound (Baling) was the tomb of Emperor Wen of the Western Han (r. 179–157 B.C.E.), and the allusion to his reign, a period characterized by peace and prosperity, was intended to bring out a poignant contrast with the present state of Chang’an. “Xia quan” (Falling Stream) is the title of a poem from the ***Shijing*** (*The Book of Poetry*) that, according to the traditional commentary, expresses a longing for a wise king:

Biting chill, that falling stream  
that soaks the clumps of asphodel.  
O how I lie awake and sigh,  
thinking of Zhou’s capital.<sup>5</sup>

Yu Xin’s quatrain is therefore like a textual set of Chinese boxes, with one box containing another containing yet another. We should keep in mind, however, that these literary echoes would have been so obvious to Yu Xin’s contemporaries or any educated premodern Chinese reader that the quatrain, rich with associations, would have remained transparent.

Just as Wang Can had looked back at Chang’an from Ba Mound, Yu Xin imagined his friend ascending the riverbank at Guangling to gaze on the Fortress of the Shooting Star, which was an indirect way of referring to the old Liang capital, Jiankang. And yet, looking through historical sources, we find that the Shooting Star was not a walled city (fortress) after all; there was a Hill of the Shooting Star to the west of Jiankang, and that was the very place where the Liang troops had fought against and eventually overpowered Hou Jing’s rebel army. As a matter of fact, the Liang general who had set up a camp at the Hill of the Shooting Star was none other than Chen Baxian, who later forced the abdication of the last Liang emperor and founded the Chen dynasty. Was Yu Xin’s choice of place-name an acknowledgment of the irony of history? Or was it simply a way to avoid a painful direct reference to Jiankang? Or was it because the verbal image of the shooting star matched so beautifully with the real beaconfires raging along the Yangtze River?

In many ways, the city of Jiankang was indeed a Fortress of the Shooting Star, whose light, although brilliant, was transient in the course of human history. Remaining the capital of the south for three centuries, it was once the “jewel in the crown of south China’s commercial empire,”

whose population “topped one million individuals, including Han Chinese, aboriginal peoples, and foreigners (especially merchants and members of the Buddhist Sangha).”<sup>6</sup> During the long, peaceful, and prosperous reign under Xiao Gang’s father, Jiankang had reached a dazzling height of cultural glory. But even in Yu Xin’s day, Jiankang had already lost its former splendor; devastated by the Hou Jing Rebellion, its light had long dimmed. What Yu Xin did not know was that, eight years after his death, following the conquest of the Chen in 589, an edict by Emperor Wen of the Sui ordered the destruction of the entire city of Jiankang: “its walls, palaces, temples and houses were to be destroyed and the land returned to agriculture.”<sup>7</sup> Yu Xin’s quatrain was prophetic in a way that he would never have wanted it to be. The star fell from heaven; once the raging beacon fires died out, it would be dark.

From the time he left Jiangling in 554 until his death in 581, as far as we can tell from the historical sources, Yu Xin not only never returned to the south, but never even got as close to Jiankang as Guangling. The quatrain, one of his last, envisions his old capital illuminated by a blazing light before being engulfed by darkness. The pathos lies not only in seeing one’s hometown torn apart by war and destruction, but also in witnessing the fall of an empire and the end of an age.

The Chinese like to situate a poem in the context of a poet’s life and times: indeed, without the background information, we would never have known what a poignant poem “In Response to Director Liu Zhen” is, and how much emotional power, intensified by restraint, is packed into a quatrain of twenty words. Yu Xin was the last of the Southern Dynasties masters. It would soon be the Tang, the golden age of Chinese poetry.

Xiaofei Tian

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## **PART 4**

# **The Tang Dynasty**

## Recent-Style *Shi* Poetry

### Pentasyllabic Regulated Verse (*Wuyan Lüshi*)

The Tang dynasty, one of China's greatest dynasties, is seen by many as the golden age of Chinese poetry. It saw an unprecedented rise of poetry's status. Poetry was made an essential part of the civil service examinations and became something of a national pursuit. The number of Tang poems composed and collected was staggering. The *Quan Tang shi* (*Complete Shi Poetry of the Tang*), compiled in 1705, contains nearly 49,000 poems by 2,200 poets.

*Shi* poetry reached its apex of development, marked by two important formal innovations, during the Tang. One was the rise of heptasyllabic poetry ([chaps. 9 and 10](#)), a form only sporadically used before the Tang, to compete with the long-dominant pentasyllabic poetry ([chaps. 5–7](#)). The other was the establishment of recent-style poetry (*jinti shi*), a heavily regulated type of *shi* poetry. The term “recent style” was invented to indicate a mandatory implementation of syntactic, structural, and tonal regulations in this new *shi* type, while the older term “ancient style” (*guti*) was broadened to designate all unregulated *shi* poetry. From the Tang onward, these two distinctive types constituted the main categories of *shi* poetry.

Recent-style poetry consists of two main subcategories of its own: *lüshi* (regulated verse) and regulated *jueju* (quatrains). *Lüshi* has a fixed length of eight lines, but its variant, *pailü* (extended regulated verse), is longer, ranging from ten all the way up to about three hundred lines. *Jueju* poems are invariably four lines. Both *lüshi* and *jueju* are further divided by line length into two: pentasyllabic and heptasyllabic.

*Lüshi* is undoubtedly one of the most complicated kinds of poetry in the

world. In writing a *lüshi* poem, a poet must strictly follow complex, interlocked sets of rules for word choice, syntax, structure, and tonal patterning. Using a famous poem by **Du Fu** (712–770) as an example, I shall explain these sets of rules to lay the groundwork for an in-depth study of pentasyllabic *lüshi* in this chapter and heptasyllabic *lüshi* in the next. A good understanding of these rules is also important for the study of both pentasyllabic and heptasyllabic quatrains in [chapter 10](#).

The introduction of mandatory sets of rules radically changed the dynamic of poetry writing. The challenge faced by a *lüshi* poet was not just to express himself, but to do so with self-imposed, severe constraints in practically all formal aspects. Inferior *lüshi* poets could easily become prisoners of all these formal rules and turn their works into a trivial language game. But in the hands of great poets, *lüshi* could become a most effective means of achieving the time-honored Chinese poetic ideal—to convey what lies beyond language. My close reading of four poems by Du Fu, **Li Bai** (701–762), and **Wang Wei** (701–761) will show how these three greatest Tang poets exploited various formal rules to the best advantage and created enchanting Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist visions of the universe and the self, with little use of abstract philosophical concepts.

## THE *LÜSHI* FORM

The poem chosen to demonstrate the complex *lüshi* form is “Spring Scene,” written by Du Fu in March 757. About nine months earlier, the capital city of Chang’an had fallen into the hands of the rebel general An Lushan, and Du Fu had been captured and briefly detained by the rebel troops. This poem about his war-torn country and family is one of the best known and most frequently recited of the pentasyllabic *lüshi* poems.

### C8.1

#### Spring Scene

- The country is broken, but mountains and rivers remain,  
2 The city enters spring, grass and trees have grown thick.  
Feeling the time, flowers shed tears,  
4 Hating separation, a bird startles the heart.  
Beacon fires span over three months,

- 6 A family letter equals ten thousand taels of gold  
 My white hairs, as I scratch them, grow more sparse,  
 8 Simply becoming unable to hold hairpins.

[QTS 7:224.2404]

Reading this translation, an English reader may not find the kind of poetic greatness that he or she has encountered in, say, Shakespeare, Wordsworth, or Keats. There is no profound philosophical or religious contemplation, no astonishing flights of imagination, no dazzling display of poetic diction. Nonetheless, as I shall demonstrate, Du Fu's "Spring Scene" deserves no less acclaim. The poetic greatness of Du Fu is of an entirely different kind. To appreciate it fully, we must go beyond the English translation and find out how the poem was composed and read in the original.

### *Word and Image*

To begin, let us look at a word-for-word translation of the poem and consider its use of words and images:

Disyllabic unit		Trisyllabic unit				
country	broken	mountain	river <sup>o</sup>	remain	國破山河在	(guó pò shān hé zài)
city	spring	grass	wood <sup>o</sup>	thick	城春草木深	(chéng chūn cǎo mù shēn)
feel	time	flower <sup>o</sup>	shed	tear	感時花濺淚	(gǎn shí huā jiàn lèi)
hate	separation	bird <sup>o</sup>	startle	heart	恨別鳥驚心	(hèn bié niǎo jīng xīn)
beacon	fire	span <sup>o</sup>	three	month	烽火連三月	(fēng huǒ lián sān yuè)
home	letter	equal <sup>o</sup>	ten thousand	gold tael	家書抵萬金	(jiā shū dǐ wàn jīn)
white	head	scratch <sup>o</sup>	even	shorter	白頭搔更短	(bái tóu sāo gèng duǎn)
simply	be about to	not <sup>o</sup>	able (to hold)	hairpin	渾欲不勝簪	(hún yù bú shèng zān)

[Tonal pattern I, see p. 171]

We are first struck by the extraordinary lexical economy: a total of only forty words. Many literary critics and scholars contend that the lexical economy stems from the noninflectional nature of the Chinese language. Inflection refers to the variation in words used to delineate the relations of tense, voice, gender, number, case, person, and so on in an alphabetic language like English. By contrast, in Chinese these complex relations are expressed by means of a rather small number of "empty words" (*xuzi*) with the aid of context and semantic rhythm (thematic table of contents 3.3). Unencumbered by inflectional variations, Chinese is far

more economical than a Western language in its use of words. To attribute the lexical economy of Tang regulated poetry solely to the Chinese language itself, however, is not entirely convincing. The rise of this condensed poetic form also has much to do with the evolution of the Chinese poetic tradition. In a Tang regulated verse, forty or fifty-six words could do so much only because most of those words had accrued so much evocative power in the long poetic tradition before the Tang. Thanks to their repeated and innovative use during the millennium preceding it, many words and collocations had become imbued with various feelings and thoughts and could evoke touching scenes of history or fiction in the mind of the informed reader. There is no doubt that the increased efficacy of the poetic lexicon led to a steady shortening of poem length toward the end of the Six Dynasties (C7.3, 7.4, and 7.6) and to the eventual birth of the *lǔshi* form in the Tang.

Imagistic appeal is another prominent feature revealed by the word-for-word translation. The poem is made up overwhelmingly of “content words” (*shizi*), words that have an actual and usually visualizable referent, thirty-six in all. Indeed, these content words produce vivid images of the following kinds:

Tangible things: grass, wood, flower, tear, bird, beacon, fire, home,  
letter, gold tael, head, hairpin

General scenes: country, mountain, river, city, spring

Concrete actions: shed, startle, scratch, hold

Mental conditions: feel, hate

Physical conditions: broken, remain, thick, separation, span, equal,  
white, able

Temporal conditions and quantities: time, three, month, ten thousand,  
shorter

Only the remaining four words (“even,” “simply,” “about to,” and “not”) are empty words. Such a lopsided ratio between content and empty words is characteristic of regulated verse in general and of High Tang regulated verse in particular. Having only forty or fifty-six words to work with, a *lǔshi* poet often sought to maximize the use of imagistic content words while keeping empty words to a minimum.

The conspicuous absence of personal pronouns is another noteworthy feature apparent in the word-for-word translation. Contrary to the assertions by some scholars, the absence of personal pronouns is not

characteristic of all Chinese poetic genres. For instance, the pronoun “I” (for example, *wo*, *wu*) appears profusely in many Han–Wei *yuefu* and *gushi* poems. Only in the Tang regulated verse do we observe an almost uniform exclusion of personal pronouns, especially that of the lyrical “I.” The hiding of the lyrical “I” produces a further liberating effect on the reader. Thanks to the absence in Chinese of the inflectional marking of time and space, Chinese readers enjoy much more freedom than readers of inflected languages in situating the depicted poetic experience. Moreover, with the lyrical “I” hidden, Chinese readers can easily enter the role of the poet and vicariously reenact his process of poetic creation. In consequence, the dynamics of reading is drastically changed from passive reception to active re-creation, as we shall see shortly.

### *Rules of Syntax*

For readers familiar with Western modernist poetry, it is not hard to see that the three features just noted—lexical economy, maximization of imagistic appeal, and minimal use of nonimagistic words—are practically the same aesthetic ideals pursued by Imagist poets like Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams. Indeed, the word-for-word translation of “Spring Scene” may seem at first glance to resemble an Imagist poem marked by a jumble of disjointed images. However, although the two traditions seem to share similar aesthetic ideals, they definitely follow opposite strategies to achieve them. While Imagist poets tend to maximize the impact of words and images by breaking up their syntactic connections, Chinese *lüshi* poets seek to produce the same impact by exploiting two covert nexuses of syntactic linkage inherent in the *lüshi* form.

The first is the nexus of words within a line. Taking another look at the word-for-word translation, we can clearly see that each line consists of a disyllabic and a trisyllabic segment, separated by a caesura (as indicated by the dotted line). Each trisyllabic unit has a one-character word and a binome, separated by a very slight pause (as indicated by °). So, instead of being a cacophony of disjointed words, each line creates a pleasurable 2 + 3 semantic rhythm, or, more accurately, a 2 + (1 + 2)/2 + (2 + 1) rhythm (thematic table of contents 3.3). This semantic rhythm, first firmly established in Han pentasyllabic *yuefu* and *gushi* poetry during the third century, is faithfully observed in pentasyllabic *lüshi* and *jueju*. It is also adopted intact in heptasyllabic *lüshi* and *jueju*.

The second is the nexus of words between the two lines of a parallel

couplet. In a *lüshi* poem, the two middle couplets are strictly required to be parallel in thematic categories as well as in parts of speech. “Spring Scene” provides a well-wrought parallelism of this kind. In the second couplet, we note a neat pairing of “feel” with “hate” (emotive verbs), “time” with “separation” (nouns of time and space), “flower” with “bird” (nouns of natural life), “shed [tears]” with “startle” (verbs of emotional response), and “tear” and “heart” (nouns related to emotion). In the third couplet, there is the meticulous matching of “beacon fire” with “home letter” (binomes relating to the transit of messages), “span” with “equal” (verbs indicative of temporal-spatial linkage), “three” with “ten thousand” (numbers), and “month” with “gold tael” (nouns of measurement).

These two nexuses of words signify a well-codified web of prescribed syntactic links underlying the forty or fifty-six words and integrating them into a unified whole.

### *Rules of Structure*

There are also two structural rules, one mandatory and the other optional, that serve to bind together the four couplets of a *lüshi* work. The first rule is a mandatory alternation of nonparallel and parallel couplets (*duiju*). The majority of *lüshi* works begin with a nonparallel couplet, continue through two parallel couplets, and end with another nonparallel couplet. A *lüshi* poet normally should not end a poem with a parallel couplet, although he could choose to begin with a parallel one. This alternation of the two couplet types gives rise to a tripartite structure of beginning, middle, and end. This structure does not, however, effect a straight sequence of narration or description. Instead, a poem’s middle part often functions to suspend the temporal flow and allow for an intense perception and reflection in the timeless lyrical present. References to a specific time and place seldom occur in this middle part. In “Spring Scene,” for instance, the two middle couplets are composed solely of words and images detached from any specific time and place.

The second structural rule is the optional observance of a four-stage progression: *qi* (to begin, to arise), *cheng* (to continue, to elaborate), *zhuan* (to make a turn), and *he* (to conclude, to enclose). This four-stage progression was widely observed in High Tang *lüshi*. In every poem discussed in this chapter, for instance, the four couplets are cast in this fashion. Now let us trace the four-stage progression in “Spring Scene”:



country	broken	mountain	river•	remain	國破山河在	(guó pò shān hé zài)
city	spring	grass	wood•	thick	城春草木深	(chéng chūn cǎo mù shēn)

Performing the function of *qi*, the opening couplet sets the time, place, and theme for the entire poem. In the first line, what is human (“country”) is set against what is natural (“mountain,” “river”), and what is “broken” by men is pitted against what “remains” in nature. The contrast between human destruction and nature’s luxuriance is not explicitly stated but implied in the second line. The thick growth of grasses and trees clearly signifies the state of an abandoned city in the springtime.

feel	time	flower•	shed	tear	感時花濺淚	(gǎn shí huā jiàn lèi)
hate	separation	bird•	startle	heart	恨別鳥驚心	(hèn bié niǎo jīng xīn)

The second couplet performs its expected function of *cheng*: to continue by focusing on a set of paralleled images. Turning away from the external scene, the poet here begins his mental engagement with the images of “flower” and “bird.” The fixing of his inward gaze on these two images eventually leads him into a reverie-like experience. Instead of giving a discursive account of this experience, however, Du Fu lets us directly experience it through a masterful play of syntactic ambiguities. The omission of the subject in the disyllabic segment allows us to infer different subjects and therefore have five different readings of the couplet (the fifth reading is discussed in [chap. 18](#)). First, we can take the poet himself to be the implied subject of both the disyllabic and trisyllabic segments, and give this reading of the couplet:

I feel about this wretched time so badly  
           that even flowers make me shed tears.  
 I hate separation so much  
           that a bird[’s call] startles my heart.

In this reading, the verbs “shed” and “startle” are taken in the causative sense. The poet is the real subject, who sheds tears and gets startled, while the flowers and the bird are merely nominal subjects or simply the cause of the poet’s emotional response.

Then, with a slight stretch of the imagination, we may combine the word “time” with “flower” and “separation” with “bird” to produce two

binomes: seasonal flower and straying bird. This leads to a second reading of the couplet:

Feeling affected by the seasonal flowers,  
I shed my tears.  
Hating to see the straying bird,  
My heart is startled [by its call].

This reading entails a change of semantic rhythm to 3 + 2, or (1 + 2) + 2. The 2 + 3 rhythm of a pentasyllabic line generally could not be altered, but Du Fu is known to have deliberately violated established semantic rhythms to achieve a special effect (a more detailed discussion of this issue appears in [chap. 9](#)). Thus this second reading is quite plausible.

Next, we can take the flowers and bird to be the subjects of the trisyllabic segments and come up with a third reading of the couplet:

As I feel the wretched time, flowers shed tears,  
As I hate separation, birds are startled in their hearts.

Finally, we can take the flowers and the bird to be the subjects of *both* the disyllabic and trisyllabic segments. This allows for the fourth reading:

Feeling the wretched time, flowers shed tears,  
Hating separation, birds are startled in their hearts.

The four readings of the second couplet present three distinct perspectives on human suffering. In the first two readings, human suffering is regarded from a purely human point of view. From such a perspective, nature appears separate from man and hence indifferent to his suffering. Worse still, nature's indestructibility and perpetual renewal, and its springtime luxuriance, only serve to painfully remind man of his frailty and misery. This unsympathetic contrast of man with nature is a time-honored theme in Chinese poetry and is unambiguously employed in the first couplet of this poem. Although this contrast is sustained by the first two readings, it is subverted in the third and fourth readings. In the third reading, human suffering is viewed from the broader perspective of man and nature as a whole. When so viewed, man's suffering is none other than nature's, and vice versa. For this reason, there is a touching resonance between man's lamenting his wretched time and flowers'

shedding their tears. In the fourth reading, human suffering is viewed from the perspective of an empathetic nature. Here, it is not man but nature that gives expression to human sorrow.

The succession of these three perspectives reveals a radical change of realities as perceived by the poet: from a disheartening juxtaposition of suffering man and indifferent nature, to the mutual resonance between man and nature, and finally to a complete empathy between man and nature. As we follow this change of perceived realities, we can vicariously relive the poet's innermost experience as he deepens his observation into a reverie.

beacon	fire	span•	three	month	烽火連三月	(fēng huǒ lián sān yuè)
home	letter	equal•	ten thousand	gold tael	家書抵萬金	(jiā shū dǐ wàn jīn)

This third couplet faithfully performs the function of *zhuan*: to engineer a turning by introducing a contrasting set of parallel images. The turning in this particular case is a shift from nature to the human world. In contrast to the flowers and bird, we have now things of the human world: “beacon fire” (*fenghuo*) and “home letter.” At first glance, these two seem to make an odd pair, as there is no apparent similarity between beacon fire and letter. But once we learn of the ancient practice of lighting a fire atop a watchtower to relay the message of an invasion by nomads, we can see that the two binomes make a perfect pair. Du Fu’s exploitation of the double entendre of *fenghuo* is indisputable. While using this meaning of “beacon fire” to produce an ingenious parallelism with “home letter,” he taps its other meaning as “flames of war” to reveal the causes of the country’s ruin and the separation of his family. The verbs “span” and “equal” are also perfectly paired, as they each denote a linkage in space or time. The lighting of a beacon fire normally signifies a linkage of two or more points in space, and so does the delivery of a family letter. However, the “beacon fire” and “home letter” are instead perceived to span time. “Three months” explicitly marks a long duration. In Chinese, the word *san* can function as either a cardinal number (three) or an ordinal number (third), depending on the context in which it occurs. According to many scholars, it works both ways here in the binome *sanyue*. First, “three months” furnishes a nice parallelism with “ten thousand gold taels” in the next line. It seems to denote the first three months of 757, when the rebels and government troops fought pitched

battles. It may also allude to a historical event that occurred in 206 B.C.E. —the three successive months of the burning of the Qin capital (located in essentially the same place as the Tang capital) after the rebel forces of Xiang Yu (232–202 B.C.E.) had overrun and torched it. Then, “third month” refers to March 757, when Du Fu composed this poem. The verb *lian* (span) leads to the suggestion that Du Fu might have been thinking of the yearlong warfare spanning the two “third months” (March 756 and March 757). “Ten thousand gold taels” is far less ambiguous. It is meant to signify the high value ascribed by Du Fu to a family letter due to the extraordinary length of separation. It also reveals the extreme difficulty of communication because of the partition of the land by the warring parties. Finally, we should take note of a touch of irony in this third couplet: it is two *linking* verbs that set forth all the temporal and spatial realities of *separation*.

white	head	scratch•	even	shorter	白頭搔更短	(bái tóu sāo gèng duǎn)
simply	be about to	not•	able (to hold)	hairpin	渾欲不勝簪	(hùn yù bú shèng zān)

The final couplet unfailingly performs its expected twin functions of *he*: to move toward a closure and to make a well-rounded whole (*yuanhe*) by joining beginning and end. If, in the third couplet, we see a shift from the country to the family, here we observe a further shift from the family to the poet himself—the quickened process of his aging. A return to the poet’s experiential world in the final couplet is a conventional move in a *lǔshi* poem. As noted earlier, the two middle couplets are strictly parallel and usually stripped of references to a specific time or place, thus projecting a timeless world in the imagination of the poet. By contrast, the final couplet is by convention nonparallel and, as such, particularly conducive to a realistic portrayal of the poet’s present condition. Consider how the dispensing of parallel syntax enables the poet to depict his own condition with a long, uninterrupted sentence: “My white hairs, as I scratch them, grow more sparse, / Simply becoming unable to hold hairpins.”

Unlike in the first three couplets, there is a single subject, the white-haired head, and all the remaining words are devoted to describing it. In presenting such a close-up portrayal of his white-haired head, the poet intends to tell us not so much his physical condition as his innermost suffering. Although it may seem to be an understatement of the poet’s

intense emotion, this close-up is actually a very powerful expression of it. When a poet's sorrow reaches the point of rapidly ruining his health, what better way can he find to indicate the depth of his suffering than by depicting the destruction of his body? While rendering pointless any abstract emotive words, this evocative image of the poet's white-haired, balding head inevitably harks back to the broken country in the first line and thus produces the dual effect of "moving in a cycle, going and returning" (*xunhuan wangfu*). As the sensitive reader goes through again the images of the broken country, the scattered family, grieving nature, and the aging poet, he perceives a grand Confucian cosmic vision, characterized by the inseparable, empathetic bonds a moral man forges with his fellow human beings, his country, and the universe at large. By his creation of such a Confucian vision of the universe and the self, Du Fu earned the appellation of "poet-sage" (***shisheng***), the highest honor to which a Confucian-minded poet could aspire.

### *Rules of Tonal Patterning*

Chinese tonal meter is much more complex than English poetic meter. Whereas a sonnet writer only needs to alternate five unstressed and stressed syllables within a line, a *lüshi* poet has to do more. He must meticulously alternate level and oblique tones between as well as within lines. Level tones refer to the first and second tones—the flat tone (for example, mā) and rising tone (má)—in Mandarin. Oblique tones consist of the third and fourth tones—the falling-rising tone (mǎ) and the short falling tone (mà)—of Mandarin and the entering tones (*rusheng*) of Middle Chinese.<sup>1</sup> This patterning of tones is constructed with a precision that leaves nothing to chance.

Ironically, this precision is what makes the complex tonal patterning easy for us to observe and master—it becomes a fairly simple matter of observing its three basic rules.<sup>2</sup> Turning again to "Spring Scene" for our example, let us go through these rules and work out all the major tonal patterns of recent-style *shi* poetry, as shown in the table.

The first rule demands a maximum contrast of tones within a line. This rule dictates that the tones of a pentasyllabic line must appear in two opposite pairs, a pair of level tones (— —) and a pair of oblique tones (| |), with an odd "one" (— or |) tipping the balance. This casting of tones mirrors the semantic rhythm of 2 + (1 + 2/2 + 1). If the odd one is placed at the end of a line, we have the first two of the four line types in recent-

style *shi* poetry: (1) | | – – | and (2) – – | | –. If it is placed at the beginning of a line, we have the other two line types: (3) – – – | | and (4) | | | – –.<sup>3</sup>

The second rule demands a maximum contrast between the two lines of a couplet. In a standard couplet, the tonal combination of the opening line is antithetically matched by that of the closing line. For instance, if the opening line is | | – – |, the closing line must be – – | | –. Alternatively, – – – | | is to be followed by | | | – –. These two line combinations (1 and 2; 3 and 4) constitute the two *standard* couplets in recent-style *shi* poetry.

### Tonal Pattern of “Spring Scene”

國破山河在	kwok	pò	shān	hé	zài			–	–	
城春草木深	chéng	chūn	cǎo	muwk	shēn	–	–			– Δ
感時花濺淚	(gǎn)	shí	huā	jiàn	lèi	( )	–	–		
恨別鳥驚心	hèn	bjet	niǎo	jǐng	xīn				–	– Δ
烽火連三月	(fēng)	huǒ	lián	sān	ngjwot	(–)		–	–	
家書抵萬金	jiā	shū	dǐ	wàn	jīn	–	–			– Δ
白頭搔更短	(bāek)	tóu	sáo	gèng	duǎn	( )	–	–		
渾欲不勝簪	hùn	yowk	pwot	(shèng)	zān				(–)	– Δ

Reverse combinations of the four line types (2 and 1, 4 and 3), however, are not permissible. What complicates the matter here is two unbending rhyming rules: all even lines must rhyme and all rhyming words must be in level tones (as indicated, in the tables, by the hollow triangular rhyme marker Δ). So line types 1 and 3, which end with oblique tones, cannot be the closing lines of a couplet. The resulting loss of two alternative couplet forms is, however, partially compensated for by the formation of two *variant* couplets. Poets choosing to employ rhyme in both lines, instead of in just the second line, of the opening couplet had no choice but to use both line types 2 and 4, which end with a level tone. They could combine them in the order of 2 and 4 (– – | | –, | | | – –) or 4 and 2 (| | | – –, – – | | –). It is important to stress that these two *variant* couplets are used only in the opening couplet.

The third rule demands a partial equivalence between two adjacent

couplets. Known as *nian* (to make things stick together), this rule is intended to help integrate the relatively self-contained couplets into a whole. It stipulates a correspondence in tone between the first two words in the closing line of a couplet and those in the opening line of the next couplet (as indicated, in the table showing the standard *jueju* tonal patterns, by the shaded areas). To avoid monotony, these two adjacent lines cannot be of the same line type. For instance, — — | | — cannot be followed by another — — | | —. The next line must be — — — | |.

So this leaves us with only two possible ways of combining two couplets into a quatrain. If line type 2 is employed in the second line, it must be followed by line type 3 in the third line; if line type 4 is employed in the second line, it must be followed by line type 1 in the third line. This combining process yields the two standard *jueju* tonal patterns, as shown in the table.

The use of rhyme in both lines of the opening couplet gives rise to two variant *jueju* tonal patterns, as shown in the next table. If we compare this table with the preceding one, we can clearly see that the two variant tonal patterns are almost identical to the two standard ones, with only a slight one-line variation (as indicated by the shaded areas). In these two tables, I have added in parentheses the tones for the two additional characters in a heptasyllabic line, which contrast with those of the first two words of a pentasyllabic line. As shown by the vertical lines, the tonal patterns of heptasyllabic *jueju* are an exact copy of those of pentasyllabic *jueju*, with only the addition of two more characters.

## Standard *Jueju* Tonal Patterns

Type I

(— —)	— —
(   )	— —     — Δ
(   )	— — —
(— —)	— — Δ

Pentasyllabic *jueju* employing this tonal pattern are C10.5 and C17.7. None of the heptasyllabic *jueju* presented in this book employs this tonal pattern.

Type II

(   )	— — —
(— —)	— — Δ
(— —)	— —
(   )	— —     — Δ

A pentasyllabic *jueju* employing this tonal pattern is C10.7 (imperfect). A heptasyllabic *jueju* employing this tonal pattern is C15.5.

### Variant *Jueju* Tonal Patterns

Type Ia

(— —)	— — Δ
(   )	— —     — Δ
(   )	— — —
(— —)	— — Δ

A pentasyllabic *jueju* employing this tonal pattern is C10.3 (imperfect). Heptasyllabic *jueju* employing this tonal pattern are C10.12 (poem 4), C10.14 (imperfect), C15.4, C15.7, C15.10, C17.3, and C17.9.

Type IIa

(   )	— —     — Δ
(— —)	— — Δ
(— —)	— —
(   )	— —     — Δ

None of the pentasyllabic *jueju* presented in this book employs this tonal pattern. Heptasyllabic *jueju* employing this tonal pattern are C10.11, C10.12 (poems 1–3), C10.13 (imperfect), C10.15, C10.16, C10.17, C15.8, C15.9, and C17.4.

Once we have worked out the four *jueju* tonal patterns, it is easy to construct the four *lüshi* tonal patterns. All we have to do is follow the same rule of partial equivalence between couplets and add two more couplets—that is, another quatrain—to each of the four *jueju* tonal patterns. This brings us to the four *lüshi* tonal patterns. As shown by the horizontal dotted lines in the two tables, the four *lüshi* tonal patterns constitute a doubling of the two standard *jueju* tonal patterns. This doubling is exact and complete in the two standard *lüshi* patterns, but involves a slight, one-line variation (the shaded part) in the two variant



*lüshi* tonal patterns.

## Standard *Lüshi* Tonal Patterns

Type I	
(--)	--
(   )	--     - Δ
(   )	-- --
(--)	-- Δ
(--)	--
(   )	--     - Δ
(   )	-- --
(--)	-- Δ

Pentasyllabic *lüshi* employing this tonal pattern are C8.1, C8.2, C17.6, and C17.13. Heptasyllabic *lüshi* employing this tonal pattern are C9.2, C9.3, and C15.1.

Type II	
(   )	-- --
(--)	-- Δ
(--)	--
(   )	--     - Δ
(   )	-- --
(--)	-- Δ
(--)	--
(   )	--     - Δ

Pentasyllabic *lüshi* employing this tonal pattern are C8.3 and C17.10.

## Variant *Lüshi* Tonal Patterns

Type Ia	
(--)	-- Δ
(   )	--     - Δ
(   )	-- --
(--)	-- Δ
(--)	--
(   )	--     - Δ
(   )	-- --
(--)	-- Δ

A pentasyllabic *lüshi* employing this tonal pattern is C8.4. Heptasyllabic *lüshi* employing this tonal pattern are C9.1, C9.6, C17.1, C17.2, C17.8, C17.12, and C18.1.

Type IIa	
(   )	--     - Δ
(--)	-- Δ
(--)	--
(   )	--     - Δ
(   )	-- --
(--)	-- Δ
(--)	--
(   )	--     - Δ

None of the pentasyllabic *lüshi* presented in this book employs this tonal pattern. Heptasyllabic *lüshi* employing this tonal pattern are C9.5, C9.7, C9.8, C15.6, and C18.2.

In the final analysis, we can say that there are only two basic types of

tonal patterning: type I and type II. All the tonal patterns presented are merely their derivatives at different removes. A fourfold division (I, II, Ia, IIa) is derived through a slight variation of the opening line for the sake of rhyming. At the next remove, an eightfold division is derived through a further differentiation by poem length (four-line *jueju* versus eight-line *lüshi*). At the last remove, even a sixteenfold division may be derived through yet another differentiation by line length (pentasyllabic versus heptasyllabic). This analysis, I hope, lays bare the inherent relationships among all the tonal patterns of recent-style *shi* poetry.

It is important to remember that the tables represent perfect tonal patterns that exist in theory but not always in practice. Rigid adherence to a tonal pattern can lead to a sacrifice of meaning for the sake of tonal regularity. So poets often took advantage of a certain amount of freedom to diverge from the set tonal patterns. For an example of the employment of one of these tonal patterns, let us return to Du Fu's "Spring Scene." The tonal pattern employed is type I. With four entering tones (*kwok*, *bjet*, *yowk*, *pwot*) restored, this poem demonstrates a much more rigorous observance of the required tonal pattern than if read in modern standard Chinese. Nonetheless, we can note four instances of variation from the established tonal pattern. For instance, from a purely technical point of view, the first character in line 3 should be in level tone, but the character *gǎn* is in oblique tone. Generally speaking, it is often permissible to deviate from the required tones of the first and third characters in a pentasyllabic line or the first, third, and fifth characters in a heptasyllabic line. All but one of the four violations here occur in the first word of a line. Students who wish to reconstruct the tonal pattern of a *lüshi* or regulated *jueju* poem need only mark out its alternation of level and oblique tones and then find out to which tonal pattern it conforms. The tonal patterns for all recent-style *shi* poems presented in this book are identified at the end of each citation and listed in the preceding tables.

## THE *LÜSHI* FORM AND YIN-YANG COSMOLOGY

The establishment of any regulated poetry, whether Chinese *lüshi* or English sonnets, represents an endeavor to formalize and amplify our delight in the natural order of language—the rhythm of both its sounds and its sense. On a more abstract plane, the *lüshi* form may be seen to reflect the order of the universe at large. To embody the grand cosmic

order in a finite work has been a high artistic ideal long pursued by the Chinese, and the *lǔshī* form is a prime example of this quest. In collectively developing the *lǔshī* form during the Qi–Liang and the Early Tang periods, Chinese poets, consciously or unconsciously, modeled it on the yin-yang cosmological scheme to such an extent that it practically became a microcosm of that scheme. Indeed, all its syntactic, structural, and metrical rules bear the imprint of the yin-yang operation as represented by this well-known symbol:



In this symbol, the sharp contrast of the black and white parts is meant to show the opposition of the basic cosmic forces of yin and yang. This fundamental opposition is mirrored in the major aspects of the *lǔshī* form. As we have seen, its basic semantic rhythm consists of a contrast between a disyllabic segment and a trisyllabic segment that is usually made up of a binome and a monosyllabic word. Also, the construction of a parallel couplet often entails a matching of opposite or different images (heaven versus earth, and so on). The organization of four couplets, too, often involves a broad, bipartite contrast between nature and man, scenes and emotions. On the level of prosody, we note a maximum contrast between level and oblique tones both within a line and between two lines of a couplet.

The black and white dots inside the opposed areas of the symbol are meant to show a subtle equivalence between yin and yang that accompanies and tempers their mutual opposition. In the *lǔshī* form, too, such an equivalence of bipolar opposites is readily noticeable. For instance, the two middle couplets each demand a stringent equivalence in parts of speech, often set against an antithesis in meaning. In addition, there is the prosodic rule of partial equivalence (*nian*) between any two adjacent couplets.

The gently curved borderline between the white and black parts of the symbol is intended to indicate a tendency of yin and yang to transform themselves into their opposites—yin becomes yang, and yang becomes yin. The dynamic interplay of yin and yang thus follows a cyclical path of thrust and counterthrust, ascendancy and decline, instead of a teleological path of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. In *lǔshī* prosody, the regular alternation of parallel and nonparallel couplets traces a similar

cyclical path.

Finally, the circle of the yin-yang symbol itself speaks to the all-inclusiveness, completeness, and eternity of the yin-yang operation. In the *lüshi* form, the repetition of the same or essentially the same tonal patterns in two quatrains and the joining (*he*) of the beginning and ending couplets are no doubt intended to create the image of a cyclical, perpetual return that resonates with the everlasting cosmic order.

## VISIONS OF THE UNIVERSE AND THE SELF

That the *lüshi* form represents a microcosm of yin-yang cosmology does not mean that all *lüshi* poems project a grand cosmic vision. In fact, countless *lüshi* poems are devoted to trivial subjects—although even the trivial gains significance when presented in the *lüshi* form. Nonetheless, when it reached its apex of development during the High Tang, the *lüshi* did become a prized vehicle for conveying grand cosmic visions. In each of the three poems to be examined, we perceive a distinct vision of the universe and the self.

### C8.2

#### The Jiang and Han Rivers

- By the Jiang and Han rivers broods a homeward traveler,  
2 Between heaven and earth is one worthless scholar.  
A lone cloud, and the sky (and I) join in being faraway,  
4 A long night, and the moon (and I) share the loneliness.  
The setting sun—yet I remain ambitious at heart,  
6 The autumn wind—from illness I will recover.  
From antiquity all the old horses that people kept,  
8 Not always were chosen for long distances.

[QTS 7:230.2523]

					江漢	(jiāng hàn)
Jiang	Han	brood	homeward	traveler	江漢思歸客	(jiāng hàn sī guī kè)
Qian	Kun	one	worthless	scholar	乾坤一腐儒	(qián kūn yī fǔ rú)
lone	cloud	sky	together	faraway	片雲天共遠	(piàn yún tiān gòng yuǎn)
long	night	moon	mutually	lonely	永夜月同孤	(yǒng yè yuè tóng gū)
setting	sun	heart	still	ambitious	落日心猶壯	(luò rì xīn yóu zhuàng)
autumn	wind	illness	is about	recover	秋風病欲蘇	(qiū fēng bìng yù sū)
antiquity	since	keep	old	horse	古來存老馬	(gǔ lái cún lǎo mǎ)
not	necessarily	chosen	long	distance	不必取長途	(bú bì qǔ cháng tú)

[Tonal pattern I, see p. 171]

This poem by Du Fu disproves the simplistic notion that poetry is a temporal art, while painting is a spatial one. It lends itself to both a spatial and a temporal reading. If we divide the poem into two columns along the vertical line separating the disyllabic and trisyllabic segments, we may read it vertically, column by column. Such a reading is spatial in the sense that it breaks up the line-by-line sequence of normal reading to reveal two highly coherent clusters of images. One consists of images of the universe, ranging from the “Qian Kun” (an alternative name for heaven and earth) to the panoramic river scenes and to atmospheric phenomena (“cloud” and “autumn wind”). The other cluster consists of a series of remarks about the self: Du Fu as a “homeward traveler,” his sense of failure, his exile and loneliness, and his determination to achieve his ambitions despite his illness and aging. While this spatial reading underscores the juxtaposition of the universe and the self, a temporal reading reveals the poet’s inner process of observation and contemplation.

Reading the poem line by line, we see a topic + comment construction in all but the last two lines (thematic table of contents 5.3). In each of the first six lines, the initial disyllabic segment presents a topic, a broad cosmic image observed by the poet; the trisyllabic segment, however, introduces a comment induced by the act of observation. In the opening couplet, the immense universe (“the Jiang and Han rivers” and “heaven and earth”) induces a pathetic and diminutive self-image: “homeward traveler” and “worthless scholar.” In the second couplet, the images of “lone cloud” and “long night” thicken the mood of loneliness and melancholic brooding, but the ensuing comments signify a slight relief from loneliness through an empathetic joining of man and nature. Like the second couplet of “Spring Scene,” this second couplet creates the

idea of a nature–man empathy through a deft manipulation of syntactic ambiguities. Here, “join” and “share” imply two or more subjects, but only one is made explicit (“sky” and “moon”). Depending on which implicit subject(s) we supply, this couplet lends itself to three different readings:

*A lone cloud* and the *sky* are together faraway,  
*A long night* and the *moon* share the loneliness.

*A lone cloud*, and the *sky* (and *I*) are together faraway,  
*A long night*, and the *moon* (and *I*) share loneliness.

*A lone cloud*—the *sky* (and *I*) are together faraway,  
*A long night*—the *moon* (and *I*) share the loneliness.

The coexistence of these three possible readings serves to create a sense of togetherness in the world—the togetherness of inanimate things and the togetherness of nature and man. The conception of this pervasive togetherness reveals a lessening of the poet’s loneliness and prepares us for a rather dramatic “turning” in the third couplet. The turning is dramatic because of the unusual juxtaposition of “setting sun” and “autumn wind”—two common images of decay and melancholy—with a surprisingly positive attitude toward the onset of illness and old age. The setting sun only spurs the poet to strive for great accomplishments, and the autumn wind only speeds up his recovery from illness. Echoing this optimistic note, the poem ends with a metaphorical statement about the true worth of an aging man.

The poet with whom Du Fu is often paired is his friend Li Bai, widely known as the “poet-immortal” (*shixian*). Widely hailed as the two greatest Chinese poets, they are the subject of a continuing debate about which is greater. They have often been perceived to be diametrically opposite types. Du Fu is sober, earnest, and morally committed, whereas Li Bai is inebriated, carefree, and transcendent. Although such a simple dichotomy inevitably obscures the complexity of the two poets’ lives and works, it has taken hold of the popular imagination. Consequently, they are both best remembered for those works that reveal these character traits. While many of Du Fu’s great poems are *lüshi* works, most of Li Bai’s best-loved and most widely recited works are ancient-style poems ([chap. 11](#)). The highly restrictive *lüshi* form seems to have been ill suited to Li Bai’s unbridled temperament and poetic style. Yet, in fact, he wrote a

number of *lǜshi* poems, in which we catch a glimpse of the quintessential Li Bai:

### C8.3

#### Climbing the Yueyang Tower with Xia Shi'er

- From the tower I look afar to where the Yueyang region ends,  
2 The river winds along to where Dongting Lake opens.  
The wild geese, taking along the heart's sorrow, have gone,  
4 The mountains, carrying the fine moon in their beak, come.  
In the midst of clouds I reach the honored guest's bed.  
6 In heaven above I receive the passing wine cup.  
After I have gotten drunk a cool wind rises,  
8 Blowing on me, sending my sleeves dancing and fluttering.
- [QTS 6:180.1838]

與夏十二登岳陽樓

(yǔ xià shí èr dēng yuè yáng lóu)

tower	behold	Yue	-yang	end	樓觀岳陽盡	(lóu guān yuè yáng jìn)
river	wind	Dong	-ting	open	川迴洞庭開	(chuān jiǒng dòng tíng kāi)
wild geese	leads	sorrowful	heart	gone	雁引愁心去	(yàn yǐn chóu xīn qù)
mountain	carry	fine	moon	come	山銜好月來	(shān xián hǎo yuè lái)
cloud	midst	reach	laid down	bed	雲間連下榻	(yún jiān lián xià tà)
heaven	above	receive	passing	cup	天上接行杯	(tiān shàng jiē xíng bēi)
drunk	afterward	cool	breeze	arise	醉後涼風起	(zuì hòu liáng fēng qǐ)
blow	people	dance	sleeve	flutter	吹人舞袖回	(chuī rén wǔ xiù huí)

[Tonal pattern II, see p. 171]

The opening couplet shows the poet in the act of viewing a panoramic scene. In the second couplet, his gaze shifts to two concrete images. The flying “wild geese,” a common image for homesickness, are here used to signify the relief of homesickness, or the “heart’s sorrow.” This transformation of a conventional image is followed by a sudden flight of imagination: the mountains have become giant birds “carrying the fine moon in their beak” and flying toward us.

The third couplet engineers a turn quite characteristic of the poet-immortal: a flight into the celestial world. Taking the poet as the implicit subject, however, we can render the couplet as follows: “In the midst of

clouds I reach the honored guest's bed. / In heaven above I receive the passing wine cup." The appearance of the poet in the final couplet makes this reading sensible and appropriate. Here Li Bai does not make man and nature equal companions, as Du Fu does, but elevates man or, rather, himself above nature to the extent that he becomes an immortal residing amid clouds and receiving a passing cup in heaven. Like Du Fu, he avails himself of personification. But for him, personification is largely a means of turning nature into a joyful playmate. The wild geese that take away the heart's sorrow and the mountains that bring in the fine moon for enjoyment become his imagined playmates.

As Li Bai consistently endows nature with his unique character traits, it is little wonder that most of the personifying verbs in his poems are not those of grief and lamentation (like "shed tears") but depict instead energetic, sprightly, and often magical action. In transforming nature into a playmate at his bidding, he in effect elevates himself to the status of the creator or master of the universe. He is not at all shy about this, and in fact speaks explicitly in the voice of the heavenly master in a poem like "Drinking Alone Under the Moon, No. 1" (Yue xia duo zhuo [QTS 6:182.1853]). His lively self-deification as lord of the universe is considered by many as the hallmark of Li Bai's greatest poems. At the very least, it sets his poems apart from the earlier quotidian poems on roaming immortals (*youxian*) and helps earn him the title of poet-immortal. Moreover, it has inspired the great *ci* poems of heroic abandon by **Su Shi** (1037–1101) and **Xin Qiji** (1140–1207) ([C12.2](#) and [C12.5](#)).

In stark contrast to Li Bai's unabashed deification of the self, we observe a deliberate suppression of the self in this poem by Wang Wei:

#### C8.4

##### Zhongnan Mountain

- Taiyi Peak approaches heaven's capital,  
2 The linked mountains extend to the edge of the sea.  
White clouds, when I look back, converge,  
4 The greenish haze, once I walk in to see it, disappears.  
The divided regions, when seen from the middle peak, change,  
6 Shaded or in the sun, the myriad valleys look different.  
I wish to find lodgings for the night in a dwelling of man,  
8 Across the brook calling to a woodcutter.



					終南山	(zhōng nán shān)
Tai	-yi	approach	heaven	capital	太乙近天都	(tài yǐ jìn tiān dū)
linked	mountains	reach	sea	corner	連山到海隅	(lián shān dào hǎi yú)
white	cloud	look back	behold	merge	白雲迴望合	(bái yún huí wàng hé)
green	haze	enter	see	nothing	青霤入看無	(qīng lǜ rù kàn wú)
divided	region	middle	peak	change	分野中峰變	(fēn yě zhōng fēng biàn)
shadowed	sun-soaked	myriad	gorges	differ	陰晴眾壑殊	(yīn qíng zhòng hè shū)
wish	find lodging	man	place	overnight	欲投人處宿	(yù tóu rén chù sù)
across	water	ask	wood	-cutter	隔水問樵夫	(gé shuǐ wèn qiáo fū)

[Tonal pattern 1a, see p. 172]

Unlike Du Fu and Li Bai, Wang Wei does not tell us about his emotional and physical conditions or his imagined feats of transcendence. Instead, he leads us through successive acts of intense visual perception. In the first couplet, he points out the Zhongnan mountains in the distance, first directing our gaze upward via Taiyi Peak to heaven and then horizontally along the linked mountains all the way to the sea. In the second couplet, he leads us away from the panoramic scene and engages us in a hide-and-seek with two atmospheric images up close. By a turning in the third couplet, he changes the object of observation from the mountains to the vast plain below. This new panoramic scene delights us with its kaleidoscopic formation of patterns and colors under the effects of the sunlight and clouds. In the last couplet, he shifts back to a nearby scene and shows us traces of man: a woodcutter and a call to him from the other side of a valley brook, asking for a place to stay for the night.

A renowned painter credited with founding the Southern School of Landscape Painting, Wang Wei is often praised for the painterly qualities in his poetry. This poem is certainly an excellent example of the painterly qualities in his finest landscape poems. It alternates panoramic scenes with close-ups and delights us with its delicate play of colors (“white clouds” versus “greenish haze,” the chiaroscuro effect of the sun). It constantly shifts the angle of observation—now horizontal and vertical, now from below upward and from above downward. All these painterly qualities work together perfectly to yield a rare feast of visual pleasure. Moreover, the depicted scenes and images trace the stages of a day’s journey of landscape viewing: starting with a distant view (first couplet), continuing through an uphill climb (second couplet) and the arrival at the

summit (third couplet), and ending with a descent into the valley at dusk (last couplet).

This poem is also a perfect example of an even more important quality of Wang Wei's finest landscape poems: their artistic embodiment of a Buddhist worldview. Interestingly, if we direct our attention to the last word in each line of the two middle parallel couplets, we notice a string of four terms frequently used in Chinese Buddhist texts to explain the Buddhist worldview: *he*, *wu*, *bian*, and *shu*. The word *he* is part of the term *hehe* (Sanskrit *sāmagarī*), which refers to a composite of causes and conditions (*yinyuan*; Sanskrit *hetupratyaya*) underlying the existence of all phenomena, objective or subjective. The word *wu* is part of the term *wu'er* (negation of two sides; neither ... nor), which denotes a Mahayanist exercise of double negation aimed at preventing the reification of any thing or concept as the ontological absolute. Insofar as all things, physical existences or mental constructs, arise from a composite of causes and conditions, they cannot possibly possess any essential substance, and therefore are all subject to mutability (*bian*) and differentiation (*shu*). It follows that Buddhist truth is *neither* being *nor* emptiness (*śūnyatā*).

Wang Wei's brilliant employment of these four terms in this poem attests to his consummate achievement as a visionary poet. With a touch of genius, he turns each of the four abstract philosophical terms into a lively verse eye, a pivotal word that animates an entire poetic line (thematic table of contents 4.2). Together, these four verse eyes engender a sustained play of perceptual illusion. The first two verse eyes, *he* (converge) and *wu* (disappear), render the atmospheric images of clouds and haze ever so elusive that their very existence becomes a question. Next, the other two verse eyes, *bian* (change) and *shu* (become different), turn the valleys and the plain into a spectacle of changing shapes and colors. This play of perceptual illusion culminates in the final couplet. There, we are led to envision a dwelling of man hidden in the woods, and yet we cannot actually see it and have to ask the woodcutter for its whereabouts. We seem to see a woodcutter out there, and yet we cannot get close and have to shout across the valley brook. The echoes of our own call in the empty valley, we surmise, may be the only answer we get. As this perceptual illusion reaches its climax, a sensitive reader may experience something like Buddhist enlightenment, or at least share the Buddhist insight into the illusory nature of existence and emptiness,

the universe and the self. For this perfect fusion of the artistic and religious, the sensory and suprasensory, Wang Wei is rightly honored with the title “poet-Buddha” (*shifo*).

Zong-qi Cai

#### NOTES

1. All entering tones end with an unaspirated consonant: *p*, *t*, or *k*. Although prevalent during Tang and Song times, entering tones no longer exist in modern standard Chinese but are preserved in many regional Chinese dialects like Cantonese and Hakka. Owing to its loss of entering tones, modern standard Chinese is considered by many to be less desirable than a dialect like Cantonese for reading Tang regulated verse out loud. (See, at the end of this volume, “Phonetic Transcriptions of Entering-Tone Characters.”)

2. I am deeply indebted to my teacher Professor Yu-kung Kao for his insightful comments on the three rules.

3. The fifth and sixth possible line types (| | — — and — — | |) are not employed in recent-style *shi* poetry.

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## Recent-Style *Shi* Poetry

### Heptasyllabic Regulated Verse (*Qiyān Lǔshī*)

Heptasyllabic regulated verse (*qiyān lǔshī*, or *qilǔ*) came into being along with pentasyllabic regulated verse during the Early Tang but remained a relatively marginal form through much of its early history. One of the key figures in expanding the range and importance of the form was **Du Fu** (712–770), who did more than anyone else to establish it on an equal footing with its pentasyllabic counterpart. This chapter focuses on a particular line of development linking Du Fu’s heptasyllabic regulated verse with the “hermetic” mode in Late Tang writers such as **Li Shangyin** (813–858), in which the form’s potential for complexity of syntax and compression of image is fully realized. Du Fu’s engaging, intimate, and often paradoxically informal writing in this technically demanding mode was influential on poets from the Late Tang on, while the intensity and stunning structural complexity of the work of his last years remained an unsurpassed standard for the *qilǔ*. Li Shangyin’s compressed, allusive, and ambiguous *qilǔ* style was influential in the early Song dynasty—the so-called Xikun style (Xikun *tī*) based on this vein in Li Shangyin became, for a time, the dominant poetic fashion at the early Northern Song court. While this style of *shī* poetry was subsequently criticized, and to a great extent abandoned in favor of other models, the enigmatic and elusive poetic atmospheres created by Li Shangyin retained a significant influence, particularly in the genre of the song lyric, or *cǐ*.

#### THE LEGACY OF DU FU

Du Fu was undoubtedly the most adventurous writer of heptasyllabic

regulated verse of his age. The form was one in which he seems to have been drawn to challenge the boundaries of poetic craft. He composed, for example, a number of heptasyllabic verses that follow the general eight-line expository structure of regulated verse but that also include deliberate violations of the regulated tonal patterns or the customary syntactic groupings within the line, intended to create the “craggy” or “rough-hewn” feel of “ancient-style” poetry (*guti shi*). Later critics formulated the category “skewed regulated verse” (*ao lü*), largely to accommodate this sort of formal experimentation by Du Fu. The poems discussed here are all prosodically strict regulated verses, but we can see in these works as well Du Fu’s recurrent preoccupation with the tension between technical polish and deliberate awkwardness.

## C9.1

### The Qu River, No. 2

- Returning from court, day after day I pawn my spring robes;  
 2 each day by the lakeside I drink my limit, and only then go home.  
 Wine debts, everywhere I go, are common;  
 4 life spans reaching seventy, from ancient times, are few.  
 A flower-weaving butterfly, deep within, appears;  
 6 a water-dabbling dragonfly, slow and placid, flies.  
 Pass word to these fine scenes, to linger and roam together:  
 8 “Let’s enjoy each other for a short while, and not part company.”

[QTS 7:225.2410]

曲江其二 (qū jiāng qí èr)

court	return	day by day	—	pawn	spring	robe	朝回日日典春衣 (cháo huí rì rì diǎn chūn yī)
each	day	river	(-side)	complete	drunk	return	每日江頭盡醉歸 (měi rì jiāng tóu jìn zuì guī)
wine	debt	ordinary	—	walk	place	exist	酒債尋常行處有 (jiǔ zhài xún cháng xíng chù yǒu)
human	life	seventy	—	antiquity	(since)	few	人生七十古來稀 (rén shēng qī shí gǔ lái xī)
weave	flower	butterfly	—	deeply	—	appear	穿花蛺蝶深深見 (chuān huā jiǎo dié shēn shēn xiàn)
touch	water	dragonfly	—	slowly	—	fly	點水蜻蜓款款飛 (diǎn shuǐ qīng tíng kuǎn kuǎn fēi)
pass	speech	wind	light	together	flow	revolve	傳語風光共流轉 (chuán yǔ fēng guāng gòng liú zhuǎn)
brief	time	each other	esteem	do not	each other	part	暫時相賞莫相違 (zàn shí xiāng shǎng mò xiāng wéi)

[Tonal pattern 1a, see p. 172]

In “The Qu River, No. 2” we recognize tonal pattern 1a ([chap. 8](#))—that is, a slight modification of type I to allow for a rhyming first line (as indicated, in the table, by the hollow triangular rhyme marker  $\Delta$ ).<sup>1</sup> Deviation from the expected tonal category (as indicated by X) is always permissible in the first syllable in the heptasyllabic regulated line, and is usually permissible in the third syllable (that is, the position corresponding to the first syllable of the pentasyllabic line).<sup>2</sup> Thus the only deviations from the expected category that need comment are those appearing in the fifth and sixth syllables of line 7. The level tone in the sixth syllable is felt to “correct” the preceding oblique tone. This particular modification of the fifth and sixth syllables of the type III line is quite common, particularly in a poem’s penultimate line.

“The Qu River” is one of Du Fu’s earlier efforts in the form (at least among those that have come down to us), dating from his brief stint as a court official in 758. Yet already we glimpse the juxtaposition of dazzling technical craft with the elusive ironies of the poet’s self-depiction that continued and intensified in his later work. The Qujiang (winding river) was in fact a lake, surrounded by a park, at the southeastern corner of the Tang capital Chang’an; it was a favorite spot for outings among the capital elite. The poet presents himself in an attitude of studied casualness, and the tone oscillates between delighted absorption in the natural beauties of the season and wry commentary on the poet’s own state of unkempt dissipation.

### **Tonal Pattern of “The Qu River”**

—	—				—	— Δ
<i>cháo</i>	<i>huí</i>	<i>nyit</i>	<i>nyit</i>	<i>diǎn</i>	<i>chūn</i>	<i>yī</i>
		—	—			— Δ
<i>měi</i>	<i>nyit</i>	<i>jiāng</i>	<i>tóu</i>	<i>jìn</i>	<i>zuì</i>	<i>guī</i>
		—	—	—		
<i>jiǔ</i>	<i>zhài</i>	<i>xún</i>	<i>cháng</i>	<i>xíng</i>	<i>chù</i>	<i>yǒu</i>
—	—				—	— Δ
<i>rén</i>	<i>shēng</i>	<i>tshit</i>	<i>dzyip</i>	<i>gǔ</i>	<i>lái</i>	<i>xī</i>
—	—			—	—	
<i>chuān</i>	<i>huā</i>	<i>gep</i>	<i>dep</i>	<i>shēn</i>	<i>shēn</i>	<i>xiàn</i>
		—	—			— Δ
<i>diǎn</i>	<i>shuǐ</i>	<i>qīng</i>	<i>tíng</i>	<i>kuǎn</i>	<i>kuǎn</i>	<i>fēi</i>
— X		—	—	X	— X	
<i>chuán</i>	<i>yǔ</i>	<i>fēng</i>	<i>guāng</i>	<i>gòng</i>	<i>liú</i>	<i>zhuǎn</i>
X	—	— X			—	— Δ
<i>zàn</i>	<i>shí</i>	<i>xiāng</i>	<i>shǎng</i>	<i>mak</i>	<i>xiāng</i>	<i>wéi</i>

Lines 3 and 4 juxtapose a deflating avowal of the poet's condition (debt) and its cause (drinking) with a sort of banqueter's philosophizing on life's impermanence. The interest of the couplet stems in part from the way in which its informal tone belies its virtuosity. The parallel relations established between the two lines—such as that between wine debts and human life (both noun phrases, formed of attributive plus class noun), which seems to posit the open bar tab as a universal condition of existence—display a whimsical brilliance. The parallel between *xun chang* (ordinary, -ily) and *qi shi* (seventy), furthermore, depends on a sort of pun on the alternative sense of *xun* and *chang* as measures of length; it is as quantities that they form a suitable parallel for the number seventy. This device of treating terms as parallel via wordplay on secondary meanings is a bravura technical effect that later critics called borrowed parallelism (*jiedui*).

The third couplet, though, is clearly the poem's center of gravity. Here

we see both vividly detailed observation and a masterful display of technique—note, for example, the way our sense in these lines of sudden, fleeting revelation is reinforced by the striking syntactic device of delaying the verb to the very last position in the line. In fact, for some later critics, the delicate artfulness of this couplet seemed almost symptomatic of the sort of display of small-scale craft for which they would criticize Late Tang and Song poetry.<sup>3</sup>

As we see in the following poem, this seeming tension between technique and naturalness is a persistent concern, for both Du Fu and his readers:

## C9.2

### On the River, I Came upon Waters Surging Like the Ocean: For Now, I Give This Short Account

- I'm an eccentric sort of person, captivated by fine lines;  
 2 until my language is startling, I'd sooner die than give up.  
 As I pass into old age, I throw myself into poems in a really slapdash way—  
 4 when spring arrives, the flowers and birds ought not to deeply worry.  
 I've newly added a pier by the water, to serve me as I dangle my fishing line;  
 6 remaining from before, my moored raft, to take the place of a boat to ride in.  
 How can I find an old hand with thoughts like Tao Qian or Xie Lingyun,  
 8 to have him compose and take excursions with me?

[QTS 7:226.2443]

江上值水如海勢聊短述

(jiāng shàng zhí shuǐ rú hǎi shì liáo duǎn shù)

as	person	nature	eccentric	delight in	fine	verses	為人性僻耽佳句 (wéi rén xìng pì dān jiā jù)
language	not	startle	person	die	not	rest	語不驚人死不休 (yǔ bù jīng rén sǐ bù xiū)
old	(-away)	poem	(-piece)	wholly	overflow	go with	老去詩篇渾漫興 (lǎo qù shī piān hún mǎn xìng)
spring	come	flower	bird	do not	deeply	worry	春來花鳥莫深愁 (chūn lái huā niǎo mò shēn chóu)
new(ly)	add	water	pier	provide	hang	fishing	新添水檻供垂釣 (xīn tiān shuǐ jiàn gòng chuí diào)
formerly	attach	floating	raft	replace	enter	boat	故著浮槎替入舟 (gù zhuó fú chá tì rù zhōu)
where	get	thought	like	Tao	Xie	hand	焉得思如陶謝手 (yān dé sī rú táo xiè shǒu)
command/make	him	relate	compose	with	together	wander	令渠述作與同遊 (lìng qú shù zuò yǔ tóng yóu)



The first couplet of this poem is often cited as perhaps Du Fu's most forthright statement of his obsessiveness as a verbal craftsman. The poem's reticences and ambiguities, however, are equally important. First of these concerns is the relation of the poem to its title. Typically, the title of an occasional poem simply states the occasion: the poem is understood as the poet's response to something in the world; the title reports what that something was. Clearly, such a straightforward formula cannot be applied here. The something that initially happened—Du Fu's vision of the river waters as vast and powerful like the ocean—is never treated directly (although we may read the third couplet as alluding to it obliquely). The train of thought linking the title and the poem would seem to go something like this: "The grandeur, vastness, and power of that scene was too great for my meager ability to do justice to it. Therefore, in place of the 'proper' poem on that topic that I was unable to write, I substitute these lines, as a comment on this breakdown of my ability as a poet." Read in this way, then, this is a poem about the failure to write a poem, and the final couplet a gently self-mocking wish for a more qualified substitute poet to call on whenever the demands of a poetic occasion are too much for Du Fu to handle.

This approach allows us to make general sense of the poem but is far from resolving the ambiguities of its tone. As a submerged counterpoint to that selfdeprecatory admission of failure, we can hear another set of possibilities: "I live for, and in, poetry. My faculty of poetic creation is as natural and powerful as the waters of a river. Whether or not my poem *describes* the flooding river waters, each remains the other's perfect analogue. To find my true peers, one would have to look to the great poets of past centuries." These tonal ambiguities are at their height in the poem's middle, parallel couplets. The third couplet's account of the poet's "equipment" for enjoying the river scenery (his pier and his raft) emphasizes its slapdash, make-do aspect. Yet might it be that just such improvised, homemade work best suits the river; that the pavilions and excursion boats of more high-toned outings are, in comparison, artificial and inauthentic? In the second couplet, the poet's wry self-mockery is again, paradoxically, voiced in language of startling technical brilliance. The opposition of *lao qu* versus *chun lai* is another instance of borrowed

parallelism: while *laoqu* and *chunlai* work perfectly as parallels in the noun–verb senses “old age–go/springtime–come,” in Du Fu’s poem only the second pair, *chun lai*, can actually be construed as noun–verb; the first line of the couplet requires that we take *lao* verbally as “grow old” and *qu* as a verbal complement, “-away.” While parallel couplets generally tend to create a sense of stasis and balance, this stroke of verbal invention gives this couplet a dynamic asymmetry and an effect of informal spontaneity. In fact, the poem as a whole is remarkable for the way in which, even while rigorously observing the symmetries and formal constraints of the regulated verse form, it conveys the immediacy of rambling speech.

The word *man* (in line 3) is a key term here. In its basic sense, it refers to the “overflow” of a liquid. In its derivative adverbial uses, it describes things that happen in a manner that is out of control, excessive, sloppy, impulsive, or not thought out. Thus Du Fu jokingly reassures the flowers and birds (which might have their secret essence revealed, or be definitively “captured,” by a more impressive poetic talent) that they need not worry—this particular old man has no pretensions to being a great poet, so they can rest easy. Yet even as we register this surface meaning, it is impossible not to hear an alternative suggestion: this effortless and slapdash manner is a sign not of a lack of power but of a fully achieved power; the flowers and birds have no more need to fear this power than they fear any other power of nature. The *man* (slapdash) manner of his poetry is a counterpart to the “overflowing” power of the river’s surging waters. Characteristically, Du Fu’s deepest reflections on poetry here are inseparable from the ironies of his self-depiction.

The set of eight heptasyllabic regulated verses entitled “Qiu xing” (Autumn Meditations) represents a point of culmination, for both the *qilü* form and these tensions within Du Fu’s poetry between the image of the powerful creator and that of the quirky and ineffectual old man. Written in 766, within four years of the end of his life, they show us the poet as he realizes that his dreams of making a mark in public life are not to be fulfilled. The “Autumn Meditations” reflect on the end of a year, of a life, and of an age—and the idea of autumn becomes a hall of mirrors within which all those endings are jumbled and superimposed. Following is the final poem of the series:

### **C9.3**

#### **Autumn Meditations, No. 8**

- Kunwu park and Yusu lodge are out there in the remote distances;  
 2 the shadow of Purple Tower peak enters Meipi lake.  
 Fragrant rice: leftovers from pecking, parrots' grains;  
 4 emerald *wutong* trees: till old age perched, phoenixes' branches.  
 Lovely ones gathered kingfisher feathers to give as springtime gifts;  
 6 transcendent companions shared a boat, moving off again toward evening.  
 My many-colored writing brush once strove with the climate;  
 8 now my white head, chanting and gazing, in despondency droops.  
 [QTS 7:230.2510]

							秋興 其八 (qiū xīng qí bā)
Kunwu	—	Yusu	—	self	far off/remote	—	昆吾御宿自遙逸 (kūn wú yù sù zì wēi yì)
Zige	—	peak	shadow	enter	Meipi	—	紫閣峰陰入漢陂 (zǐ gé fēng yīn rù hàn pí)
fragrant	rice	peck	(-leftover)	parrot	—	grain	香稻啄餘鸚鵡粒 (xiāng dào zhuó yú yīng wǔ lì)
emerald	<i>wutong</i> tree	perch	(-old)	phoenix	—	branch	碧梧棲老鳳凰枝 (bì wú qī lǎo fèng huáng zhī)
lovely	person	gather	kingfisher	spring	each other	ask/visit	佳人拾翠春相問 (jiā rén shí cuì chūn xiāng wèn)
transcendent	companion	share	boat	evening	again	move	仙侶同舟晚更移 (xiān lǚ tóng zhōu wǎn gèng yí)
colored	brush	in the past	once	disturb	vapor	image	彩筆昔曾干氣象 (cǎi bǐ xī céng gān qì xiàng)
white	head	chant	gaze	bitter	low	hang	白頭吟望苦低垂 (bái tóu yín wàng kǔ dī chuí)

[Tonal pattern I, see p. 171]

Kunwu Park, Yusu Lodge, Purple Tower Peak, and Lake Meipi were excursion sites nestled in the Zhongnan mountain range, south of Chang'an. Du Fu had frequented this area on outings during stints at the capital early in his career and had composed occasional poems on those visits. Line 2 of this poem seems to be a deliberate echo of a striking image from one of these earlier poems, "Song of Lake Meipi" (Meipi xing), in which the poet, on a boating excursion on the lake as evening falls, sees the black masses of the surrounding mountains inverted on the water's surface.

Thus as the Du Fu of the "Autumn Meditations," in his southern exile at Kuizhou on the banks of the Yangtze River, gazes out into the imagined distance far into the north to the capital, he gazes back as well into his own past as a minister of the empire and as a poet. This personal retrospective is, in turn, interwoven with a more general meditation on the fortunes of the Tang, which seemed already to Du Fu—as for many writers throughout the remaining century and a half or so of the dynasty

—to have permanently lost something magical with the fall of the capital and the flight of **Xuanzong** (r. 712–756) in 756. Moreover, particularly in the final poems of “Autumn Meditations,” this retrospective extends still further to include the far remoter Han dynasty past. The poem immediately preceding this one in the cycle is largely a meditation on fragmentary remnants of Han grandeur, and we are meant to register that the very names “Kunwu park” and “Yusu lodge” are themselves relics of the grand Shanglin Park, developed under the auspices of Emperor Wu of the Han (Yusu means “imperial lodging place,” so-called because Emperor Wu stayed there on his excursions) and immortalized by the *fu* (rhapsody) writers of that age.<sup>4</sup> All these frames of reference are telescoped together, creating extreme compression, multiplicity, and fragmentation of meaning.

The most striking case of such compression in this poem occurs in the second couplet. Here parallelism becomes a formal container that suggests a completeness and stability that the words themselves never quite yield. As we move through each line, we are repeatedly thrown back and forced to start over in our effort to resolve the syntax. Nouns are followed by verbs but cannot be the subjects of those verbs—rice does not “peck,” and *wutong* trees do not “perch”—and these verbs are immediately further skewed by the addition of the odd verbal complements “leftover” and “old,” and so on through the line. Parallelism by its nature allows for more syntactic flexibility than would be possible in linear composition, as the stability of the “vertical” relations between lines within the couplet allows the “horizontal” relations of line syntax to be correspondingly relaxed. But the degree of syntactic disruption in this couplet remains extraordinary. We might compare the much milder effect of the third couplet in “The Qu River”: “A flower-weaving butterfly, deep within, appears; / a water-dabbling dragonfly, slow and placid, flies.” As we saw, these lines involve a kind of “loading” in which the somewhat complex relations of attributive clause, noun, and adverb await a release that is delayed to the very end of the line. The far denser syntactic loading in the “Autumn Meditations” couplet, by contrast, leads not to a clear moment of resolution, but to an indefinite suspension. We finally have to construe the syntax of the third through sixth syllables of these lines as attributive clauses with inverted subjects, together modifying the final-position nouns “grain” and “branch.” But the exact relation between these nouns and the “fragrant rice” and “emerald *wutong* tree” that open the lines could be predication, apposition, or contrast or a range of other

possibilities. All that seems certain of the relation is that a grain is a fragment of rice, and a branch is a fragment of a tree. Thus all our efforts to resolve the line's fragmented syntax leave us with fragments. In this cycle, Du Fu meditates on the material and literary remnants of personal and cultural history, saddened by the failure of those fragments to cohere, to recapture a lost wholeness. In couplets like this, we see the poet creating a verbal texture that mirrors that struggle in the mind.

The poem's close alludes to a story told of the Southern Dynasties poet Jiang Yan (444–505): Jiang Yan meets the Jin dynasty writer Guo Pu (276–324) in a dream; Guo Pu asks him to return the multicolored writing brush that Guo Pu had lent him long before. On waking, Jiang Yan finds that his literary talent has left him. By now, it should not be entirely surprising that even as Du Fu creates radically new possibilities for poetic language, he presents himself as a poet whose talent has failed him, a bitter old man by the riverside.

## **AMBIGUITY AND FRAGMENTATION IN LATE TANG STYLE**

One of the pivotal figures in creating a distinctively Late Tang poetic landscape is Li He (791–817). Li He came to be viewed as the very embodiment of many characteristic Late Tang traits: an obsessive, even pathological, fixation on craft; an aesthetic sensibility centered on the fragmentary line or image; and more generally the idea of poetry as *difficult*, for both the poet and the reader. Li He wrote very little in the regulated forms, but he was a key influence on several important writers who did, so our discussion of Late Tang style will begin with the following example from Li He, an unregulated heptasyllabic song:

### **C9.4**

#### **Dreaming Heaven**

- Old hare and cold toad weep sky's sheen;  
2 a cloud-enfurled tower half opens: on the walls slants whiteness.  
The jade wheel presses dew: wet balls of light;  
4 simurgh bells and pendants meet on cassia-scented lanes.  
Yellow dust, clear water, beneath the Immortal Mountains,  
6 change in turn, a thousand years like a horse that gallops by.  
Gaze far off on the middle continent, those nine spots of smoke:

8 a single stream of ocean water poured into a cup.

[QTS 12:390.4396]

							夢天	(mèng tiān)
old	hare	cold	toad	weep	heaven	color	老兔寒蟾泣天色	(lǎo tù hán chán qì tiān sè)
cloud	tower	half	open	wall	slant	white	雲樓半開壁斜白	(yún lóu bàn kāi bì xié bái)
jade	wheel	roll/press	dew	wet	ball/round	light	玉輪軋露濕團光	(yù lún yā lù shī tuán guāng)
simurgh	pendant	each other	meet	cassia	fragrance	path	鸞珮相逢桂香陌	(luán pèi xiāng féng guì xiāng mò)
yellow	dust	clear	water	three	mountain	(-beneath)	黃塵清水三山下	(huáng chén qīng shuǐ sān shān xià)
switch	change	thousand	years	like	running	horse	更變千年如走馬	(gēng biàn qiān nián rú zǒu mǎ)
distant(ly) gaze	Qi	region/island	nine	spots	smoke/mist		遙望齊州九點煙	(yáo wàng qí zhōu jiǔ diǎn yān)
one	clear/deep	ocean	water	cup	(-inside)	drain	一泓海水杯中瀉	(yī hóng hǎi shuǐ bēi zhōng xiè)

One perceptive critic has noted that in “Dreaming Heaven” we cannot tell whether the dream is in heaven or heaven in the dream.<sup>5</sup> The translation may seem to leave many of the relations between images undetermined, but in fact in many instances it involves a narrowing down of the imaginative possibilities that remain open in the original. In line 2, for example, we do not know whether the cloud tower is a tower veiled wholly or partly in clouds (which would be the normal terrestrial way of construing the phrase), or a tower built on, in, or out of clouds (all of which, for all we know, might well be normal heavenly ways of construing it). “Slanting” is often used in descriptive poetry of oblique rays of light, but in this poem the marked absence of any clear sense of up or down or level makes it anyone’s guess whether it is the light or the wall that “slants.” “Jade wheel” is a familiar kenning for the moon, but the specificity and concreteness of the idea of a jade wheel pressing dew makes it impossible to resolve the image into any single recognizably human perspective on the moon. Here and elsewhere in Li He, we are dealing with a poetic language that creates a remarkably vivid and immediate experience—but in the end leaves us unable to pin down what it is an experience *of*. For example, synecdoche—the designation of a whole by one of its parts—is a familiar device by which traditional descriptive poetry achieves economy and vividness of expression. In Li He, however, synecdoche is commonly used to defamiliarize the familiar, or to hint cryptically at modes of perception that are beyond ordinary human bounds. When “simurgh bells” (conventionally an ornament found on carriages) and “pendants” meet in the “cassia-scented lanes” (the cassia being the tree traditionally supposed to grow on the moon), we may be dealing with a meeting of carriage riders and pendant wearers,

but the predominant impression we retain is of an otherworldly strangeness. Any whole of which these fragmented images might be part remains tantalizingly beyond our grasp.

Li Shangyin (813–858), perhaps the most important Late Tang poet, was deeply influenced by Li He—in fact, the only model of comparable importance for his work was Du Fu. We see something of this blend of influences in “Milky Way: Syrinx-Playing”:

## C9.5

### Milky Way: Syrinx-Playing

- Despondent gazing at the Milky Way: a jade syrinx plays;  
 2 the tower is cold, the courtyard chill, all the way to daybreak.  
 Beneath layered quilts, in far-off dream, another year breaks off;  
 4 on a lonely tree, a wandering bird last night cried out in fear.  
 By the moonlit gazebo a familiar scent, after rain, wafts out;  
 6 in the windblown curtain a dwindling candle, through the frost, burns  
 clearly.  
 No need to think wild thoughts of ascending from Mount Gou;  
 8 the zither of the Xiang and the panpipe of Qin have feeling all their  
 own.

[QTS 16:540.6185]

							銀河吹笙	(yín hé chuī shēng)
dejected gaze	silver	river	blow	jade	syrinx		悵望銀河吹玉笙	(chàng wàng yín hé chuī yù shēng)
tower	cold	courtyard	frigid	touch/connect	daybreak	—	樓寒院冷接平明	(lóu hán yuàn lěng jiē píng míng)
double	quilt	remote	dream	other	year	broken	重衾幽夢他年斷	(chóng qīn yōu mèng tā nián duàn)
separate	tree	wandering	female bird	yesterday	night	startled	別樹羈雌昨夜驚	(bié shù jī cí zuó yè jīng)
moon	gazebo	former	fragrance	following on	rain	send out	月榭故香因雨發	(yuè xiè gù xiāng yīn yǔ fā)
wind	curtain	leftover	candle	across	frost	clear	風簾殘燭隔霜清	(fēng lián cán zhú gé shuāng qīng)
not	need	wildly/in vain	make	Gou	mountain	thought	不須浪作巖山意	(bù xū làng zuò gōu shān yì)
Xiang	zither	Qin	panpipe	self	have	feeling	湘瑟秦簫自有情	(xiāng sè qín xiāo zì yǒu qíng)

[Tonal pattern 11a, see p. 172]

Several of Li Shangyin's most distinctive heptasyllabic regulated verses are left untitled. Other poems, like this one, have enigmatic titles drawn from phrases in the poem's opening lines. As we have seen, the customary function of the title in classical Chinese poetry is to state the

poem's occasion—or at the very least, as in the case of *yuefu* poetry, to give clear generic signals as to how to go about reading the poem. To leave a poem untitled, or to give it an enigmatic title, is therefore a pointed gesture. Many critics of Li Shangyin, taking this gesture as a challenge to the reader to ferret out some actual context of composition that the poet withheld, have read such poems as veiled expressions of erotic or political meanings that were too scandalous to be stated more openly. For our purposes, however, it would seem more promising to look at these untitled or ambiguously titled poems in a different way: by suspending the usual relation between title and poem, Li Shangyin has created a form in which he can explore disorienting poetic textures and images that deliberately allow for a multiplicity of readings. This poem, for example, might be (and has been) read as a *yongwu* poem on the syrx, as an occasional poem upon hearing syrx-playing (Li He had written several fantastic poems on listening to music that might have served as models), as a poem on roaming transcendents, or as a poem about, or in the voice of, a lover longing for an absent beloved.

If the general atmosphere of chilly, nighttime mysteriousness recalls Li Shangyin's debt to Li He, the middle couplets show a compression and multivalence that recall late Du Fu. Line 3 involves the shattering of a dream—but were those “other years” something dreamed of, is a dream once dreamed in other years now recalled, or do those “other years” themselves appear now like a broken dream? While the idea of a causal link between the sound of the bird's cry and the waking is there if we choose to take it up, what the lines convey more immediately is the awakening mind's state of disorientation. The bird's cry, in turn, can be either a literal birdcall or a figure for the sound of the syrx. The sense of temporal disorientation in particular is developed in the following couplet, where the terms “familiar” and “dwindling” both point to unspecified spans of past time, the first on the scale of a life, and the second on the scale of one night (and the dream that unfolded as the candle was burning down). Beneath the surface of these images lies that commonplace dear to Late Tang storytellers and poets alike: life is like a dream.

The final couplet involves a flurry of allusions to traditions about immortals. The penultimate line refers to Prince Jin (also known as Prince Qiao), a Daoist transcendent and master syrx player who rode into heaven on a white crane on the seventh day of the seventh month from Mount Gou. In the final line, the phrase “zither of the Xiang” refers to the consorts of the legendary sage-king **Shun**, E Huang and Nü Ying,



who became goddesses of the Xiang River—a passage in the *Chuci* poem “Yuan you” (Far Roaming) portrays a spirit of the Xiang River playing the zither. The phrase “panpipe of Qin” refers to the tale of Xiao Shi, who summoned a phoenix with his panpipe and, together with his betrothed, the princess Nong Yu, rode into heaven. This set of allusions to immortal lovers also calls to the association of the Milky Way with the Oxherd and Weaver Girl, celestial lovers (and constellations) separated by the “river” of the Milky Way and allowed to cross and meet for one night each year, on the seventh day of the seventh month. Thus the final couplet seems a call to choose companionship over a solitary quest for transcendence—although the context in which this call is voiced remains impossible to pin down.

Another type of poem in which Li Shangyin wrote quite innovative regulated verse was the historical meditation, of which “Sui Palace” is one of the most renowned examples:

## **C9.6**

### **Sui Palace**

- Purple Spring palace halls lay locked in mist and haze;  
2 he wanted to take the “ruined city” as a home of emperors.  
The jade seal: if not because it returned to the sun’s corner,  
4 brocade sails: they would have arrived at heaven’s bounds.  
To this day, the rotting grass is without fireflies’ flash;  
6 through all time, the drooping willows have sundown crows.  
Beneath the earth, if he should meet the Latter Lord of Chen,  
8 would it be fitting to ask again to hear “Flowers in the Rear  
Courtyard”?

[QTS 16:539.6161; also translated and discussed under [C18.1](#)]

							隋宮 (suí gōng)
purple	spring	palace	hall	lock	mist	haze	紫泉宮殿鎖煙霞 (zǐ quán gōng diàn suǒ yān xiá)
want	take	overgrown/waste	city	make	emperor	household	欲取蕪城作帝家 (yù qǔ wú chéng zuò dì jiā)
jade	seal	not	because of	return	sun	corner/horn	玉璽不緣歸日角 (yù xǐ bù yuán guī rì jiǎo)
brocade	sail	ought	to be	arrive at	sky	boundary/end	錦帆應是到天涯 (jǐn fān yīng shì dào tiān yá)
at	present	rotten	grass	lack	firefly	fire	於今腐草無螢火 (yú jīn fǔ cǎo wú yíng huǒ)
end	antiquity	hanging	willow	have	sunset	crow	終古垂楊有暮鴉 (zhōng gǔ chuí yáng yǒu mù yā)
earth	(-below)	if	meet	Chen	latter	lord	地下若逢陳後主 (dì xià ruò féng chén hòu zhǔ)
[question word]	fitting	again	ask	rear	courtyard	flower	豈宜重問後庭花 (qǐ yí chóng wèn hòu tíng huā)

[Tonal pattern 1a, see p. 172]

Ninth-century poetry on historical themes often shows affinities in both choice and handling of its material with works in short narrative fiction (the genre later referred to as *chuanqi*) from the same period. Whereas historical poetry of earlier eras tends to didacticism, elegy, or veiled allegory on contemporary events, poets in this period often used historical themes as vehicles for daring flights of fancy, or to delight in logical paradoxes of historical causation.<sup>6</sup> This poem meditates on traces of the Sui dynasty, the regime that, in 589, reunified China after the long period of division known as the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420–589), only to be quickly supplanted, in turn, by the Tang in 618. The central figure of this poem is the Sui emperor **Yang**, who spent huge sums on massive public-works projects and indulged in frequent excursions through the newly conquered south. He ordered the construction of elaborate palace compounds in the southern city of Guangling (present-day Yangzhou), to serve as a temporary capital during these southern sojourns; a newly constructed system of canals linked the Sui’s northern and southern capitals.

Here, the place-names “Purple Spring palace” and “ruined city” are fraught with irony. The Southern Dynasties poet Bao Zhao (414–466) had written “Wu cheng fu” (*Fu* on the Ruined City) on the history of Guangling. This piece was commonly read as a veiled commentary on a

Southern Dynasties prince who had begun an ill-fated rebellion in the Guangling area during Bao Zhao's time. Thus to say that Emperor Yang wanted to "take the 'ruined city' as a home of emperors" amounts to an implicit criticism of his failure to learn from history. A still more recondite layer of ironies in these opening lines relates to the given names of Emperor Yang and the Tang founder who displaced him. Purple Spring was the name of a river in the Chang'an area, so "Purple Spring palace" refers to the Sui palaces at Chang'an, which Emperor Yang left behind, neglected and shrouded in mist, on his southern excursions. During the Sui, the place-name Purple Spring would have been written Ziyuan. But Li Shangyin, writing more than two hundred years later as a Tang subject, was required to observe the taboo on the name of the Tang founder, Li Yuan (r. 618–626), and call it, by a conventional substitution of synonyms, Ziquan. The city referred to indirectly here by means of the reference to Bao Zhao's *fu* would have been properly called by its ancient name of Guangling during Li Shangyin's time, but during the Sui it had been renamed Jiangdu (Metropolis on the Yangtze) to avoid violating the taboo on Emperor Yang's given name, Guang. Through such arcane wordplay, Li Shangyin conveys a vision of history as a disorienting space of ironies and unrealized possibilities.

The view of history as a chain of cryptic ironies is carried to an extreme pitch in the second couplet. The "jade seal" is the symbol of imperial office, while the "brocade sails" refer to one of numerous fantastic narratives about Emperor Yang's southern excursions, which describes brocade-sailed boats following one after the other for miles along the newly opened waterways. The couplet initially seems as dense as anything in "Autumn Meditations" and yields its meaning only when we recognize the extreme instance of borrowed parallelism around which it is constructed. In order to understand the couplet, we need to take *ri jiao* as the term from the art of physiognomy for hornlike protuberances on the forehead indicating a person destined to become emperor—that is, Li Yuan. Thus the couplet yields the sense, "If the seal of office had not been destined for Li Yuan, those chains of boats would have continued forever, to the very ends of the earth." The riddling and eerily synecdochic quality of the lines presents the workings of history as something just as mysterious as the celestial realm depicted by Li He.

The poem's second half alludes to further anecdotal traditions about the latter years of the Sui. Emperor Yang is supposed to have imposed a levy of fireflies on the populace, solely for the sake of releasing them to

provide light during a nighttime excursion (medieval science held that fireflies were generated from rotting grass). Willow trees were also reportedly levied, to be planted along the banks of the extensive canal system that was to become, for later ages, the Sui's most lasting monument. The surname of the Sui imperial house, Yang, was itself also the name of a kind of willow. The final couplet refers to an episode in an apocryphal tale about Emperor Yang in which he visits the former emperor of the last of the Southern Dynasties, the Chen. In the story, Emperor Yang requests to hear the former emperor's favorite consort sing "Flowers in the Rear Courtyard"—a song that had become associated with the extravagance of the former emperor and, in retrospect, with the Chen's downfall. Li Shangyin suggests that in the afterworld Emperor Yang, having himself succumbed to a similar fate, might be less quick to mock a defunct emperor.

The mode of poetic writing with which Li Shangyin was to be most closely associated was his distinctive hermetic brand of the poetry of romance:

### C9.7 Untitled

- Rustling, whistling, the east wind and the fine rain come;  
 2 beyond the lotus pool there is faint thunder.  
 Gold toad gnaws the lock: burning incense, it enters;  
 4 jade tiger pulls silk cord: drawing well water, it turns.  
 Miss Jia peers in at the curtain: Secretary Han is young;  
 6 Empress Fu leaves behind a headrest: the prince of Wei is gifted.  
 Don't let your springtime heart vie with the flowers in blooming:  
 8 an inch of love longing, an inch of ash.

[QTS 16:539.6162–6163]

無題 (wú tí)

rustling/whistling —	east	wind	fine	rain	come	颼颼東風細雨來 (sà sà dōng fēng xì yǔ lái)
lotus —	pool	(outside) there is	light	thunder		芙蓉塘外有輕雷 (fú róng táng wài yǒu qīng léi)

golden	toad	gnaw	lock	burn	incense	enter	金蟾齧鎖燒香入 (jīn chán niè suǒ shāo xiāng rù)
jade	tiger	tug	silk	draw water	well	turn	玉虎牽絲汲井迴 (yù hǔ qiān sī jí jǐng huí)
Jia	(-clan)	peep	curtain	Han	clerk	young	賈氏窺簾韓掾少 (jiǎ shì kuī lián hán yuàn shào)
Fu	(-empress)	leave	pillow	Wei	prince	talented	宓妃留枕魏王才 (fú fēi liú zhěn wèi wáng cái)
spring	heart	do not	with	flowers	strive	bloom	春心莫共花爭發 (chūn xīn mò gòng huā zhēng fā)
one	inch	mutual longing	one	inch	ash		一寸相思一寸灰 (yī cùn xiāng sī yī cùn huī)

[Tonal pattern 11a, see p. 172]

The opening images of the onset of a rainstorm are fresh and vivid, and at the same time erudite: they echo atmospheric passages from the “**Jiu ge**” (Nine Songs) in the *Chuci*, particularly “Shan gui” (Mountain Spirit), depicting a thwarted tryst between a goddess and her mortal lover. The suggestion of a lovers’ tryst, whether actual or imagined, successful or frustrated, is continued in the sound image of line 2, since the rumble of thunder, in the poetry of romance, is a stock metaphor for the sound of the lover’s carriage wheels. But in this poem, while this stock image suggests a possible range of associations, we are never given quite enough context to allow us to determine a definite frame of reference. Thus the “faint thunder” here may be actual thunder or the rumbling carriage wheels of the lover, approaching or receding, in the distance. Li Shangyin seems to delight in creating ambiguous poetic atmospheres such as this one, in which we hear a sound, muffled by an indefinite distance, that might be either.

The second couplet shows us this evocative and atmospheric style at its best. The toad would seem to be part of a metal ornament on a lock, and the tiger a figuration on a well pulley. These zoomorphic ornaments may be read as a scene setting of the interior space in which the lover waits, and they may also suggest enigmatic analogies with the tryst. Although the lock is secure, the incense smoke seeps through; although the well is deep, the bucket returns to the surface, bearing water from the depths. More important, again, than reaching a definitive solution is to register the quality of mystery and indeterminacy created in this couplet, where we can see both the fragmentation and the compression of late Du Fu and the brand of synecdochic fantasy pioneered by Li He.

The third couplet hinges on allusions to legends of illicit loves. Line 5 continues the veiled analogy in line 3 between incense smoke, in its ability to penetrate otherwise impermeable barriers, and erotic mingling: Han Shou was a young and handsome clerk in the employ of the Jin dynasty official Jia Chong; Jia Chong’s daughter glimpsed Han Shou

through a window and began an affair with him; the lovers were found out when Jia Chong, while meeting with Han, detected the scent of a rare incense from a private Jia family stock. The “headrest” of line 6 is involved in a more complex web of textual references, in which it may stand for either the frustration or the consummation of clandestine desire. The Wei dynasty prince and renowned poet **Cao Zhi** (192–232) wrote “Luo shen fu” (*Fu* on the Luo River Goddess), a *fu* that became one of the most renowned literary depictions of romance between a goddess and a human lover. Later tradition linked this poem with an apocryphal story of star-crossed love between Cao Zhi and Empress Zhen, wife of Cao Zhi’s elder brother, Cao Pi (187–226), Emperor Wen of the Wei dynasty. Cao Zhi, the story has it, had unsuccessfully sought the hand of the future Empress Zhen before her betrothal to Cao Pi. Years later—after Empress Zhen had been murdered through the machinations of a rival empress—Cao Zhi made an appearance at Cao Pi’s court, and Cao Pi happened to show him an ornately inlaid headrest that had belonged to the late empress. Cao Zhi burst into tears on seeing this object, and Cao Pi, divining the reason, gave him the headrest as a memento. On his journey away from the capital back to his own fiefdom, Cao Zhi paused by the Luo River, musing on Empress Zhen. Her spirit then appeared to him, identified the headrest as part of her dowry, and announced that she was transferring that dowry, and herself, from her former husband to Cao Zhi; their love was at last consummated. Cao Zhi then composed “Gan Zhen fu” (*Fu* in Response to Zhen’s Epiphany). Only afterward, the story goes, was the title altered by Cao Pi’s heir to “*Fu* on the Luo River Goddess,” to avoid scandal.

Such elaborate echoes of narrative prose texts remind us again of the close interrelations between the fantasies of storytellers and of poets in this period. Like the elusive and fragmented images, however, the references are used in this poem in such a way as to open up spaces of association while preventing us from being able to settle on a definite version of just what story the poem itself is telling. The observation about passion with which the poem closes could be applied as well to the texture of Li Shangyin’s language in this poem: cryptic clues create a tantalizing illusion of an alluring scent and suggest the nearness of a burning heat. When we attempt to gain a firm hold on just where and what it is, it proves as fragile and insubstantial as ash.

## Brocade Zither

- The brocade zither without reason has fifty strings;  
 2 each string has its bridge; one longs for the flowering years.  
 Master Zhuang, in dawn dream, is lost in a butterfly;  
 4 Emperor Wang's springtime heart is entrusted to the cuckoo.  
 On the gray sea, the moon shines bright, and the pearl has tears;  
 6 At Indigo Field, the sun is warm, and jade gives off smoke.  
 This feeling, one can wait for it to become a recollection;  
 8 only at the time it was already bewildering.

[QTS 16:539.6144]

							錦瑟 (jǐn sè)
brocade	zither	without	point/reason	fifty	—	strings	錦瑟無端五十絃 (jǐn sè wú duān wǔ shí xián)
one	string	one	bridge	ponder	flowery	years	一絃一柱思華年 (yī xián yī zhù sī huá nián)
Zhuang	scholar	dawn	dream	be lost	butterfly	—	莊生曉夢迷蝴蝶 (zhuāng shēng xiǎo mèng mí hú dié)
Wang	emperor	spring	heart/mind	entrust	cuckoo	—	望帝春心託杜鵑 (wàng dì chūn xīn tuō dù juān)
gray	sea	moon	bright	pearl	have	tear	蒼海月明珠有淚 (cāng hǎi yuè míng zhū yǒu lèi)
indigo	field	sun	warm	jade	emit	smoke	藍田日暖玉生煙 (lán tián rì nuǎn yù shēng yān)
this	feeling	may	await	become	recall	memory	此情可待成追憶 (cǐ qíng kě dài chéng zhuī yì)
only	is	at that	time	already	at a loss	—	只是當時已惘然 (zhǐ shì dāng shí yǐ wǎng rán)

[Tonal pattern IIa, see p. 172]

“Brocade Zither” is almost certainly Li Shangyin’s best-known poem, and it is the poem with which many early editions of his works opened. Depending on how we look at it, it is either paradoxical or perfectly fitting that it is also surely the one poem in his collection whose precise meaning has been the subject of the greatest controversy. Here we lack even the sort of hint about the poem’s mode that we are given in the untitled poem just discussed. Like the poem “Milky Way: Syrinx-Playing,” “Brocade Zither” has been read as a *yongwu* poem on a musical instrument, as a lament for the poet’s wife, as a veiled comment on an illicit affair, and as a complaint about a patron’s neglect. Any reading offered here will necessarily be hypothetical, one possibility among many. I follow the lead of those traditional readers who have read the poem as introducing Li Shangyin’s collected poetry and thus more generally as a poem about the poetic art.

Line 1 alludes to an etiological myth (that is, a story purporting to

explain the origins of an object or institution) about the zither. In the story, White-Silk Maiden played on a fifty-string zither for the mythic sage-ruler Fuxi, and the sound was unbearably mournful. To find relief from this sound, Fuxi broke the zither in half, creating the latter-day twenty-five-string zither. The fifty strings thus suggest a kind of expressive power and complexity that overwhelm the listener's ability to bear; here, as each zither string is supported by its bridge, each element in that overwhelming mass of sound stirs corresponding tones in memory.

The middle couplets create networks of association within which these correspondences are free to resonate. The images center on mysteries of transformation, and of occult sympathy, that span the gap between human experience and the creatures and objects of the natural world. **Zhuangzi** dreamed he was a butterfly—so vividly that, on waking, he could no longer feel sure whether he was really Zhuangzi or a butterfly. Emperor Wang, legendary ruler of Shu, sent his minister Bie Ling to work on irrigation and flood control, and in Bie Ling's absence had an adulterous affair with Bie Ling's wife. On Bie Ling's return, Emperor Wang was overcome with shame. He departed, abdicating his throne to his minister, and was transformed into a cuckoo. This bird was then forever linked in memory with Emperor Wang, whose given name, Du Yu, became an alternative name for the species. The verb *tuo* (entrust) is also used to describe the use of a figure of speech, so that when we use the image of a cuckoo as a metaphor to express feelings of sadness or regret like those of the legendary Du Yu, we also “entrust the spring heart of Emperor Wang to the cuckoo.” The third couplet alludes to still further myths of sympathy and transformation: line 5 combines the legend that pearls wax and wane in phase with the moon with the legend of ocean-dwelling mermaids (or shark people [*jiao ren*]) who weep pearl tears. Line 6 draws on a range of possible textual echoes: Lantian (literally, Indigo Fields) was in fact the name of a place renowned for its jade. The story of a hero named Chang Hong tells how, after he was unjustly killed, his blood turned to jade. The tale of a girl named Purple Jade tells how she returned as a spirit after her death to clear the name of her would-be lover, Han Zhong, of a charge of tomb robbery. Moved by Han Zhong's earnest grief, she appeared to him in spirit and gave him a pearl from her grave hoard. When her mother rushed forward to embrace her, she dissolved like smoke. Another text often cited as a possible point of reference is the comment by Dai Shulun (732–789) that the scenes of poetry are like the mist that rises from the fine jade of Lantian in the



warmth of the sun; they can be gazed at from afar but cannot be placed immediately before the eyes.

Li Shangyin seems to admit here that he himself has a difficulty similar to that we face as his readers: while the compression of his poetic language leads us to infer a latent intensity of emotion, that same compression obliterates the particularity of reference, and in the end the exact source and nature of this feeling eludes any attempt—by poet or reader—to pin it down once and for all. The problem of indeterminacy of poetic meaning, in this view, is ultimately a counterpart of the indeterminacy of feeling and memory: the heart, like the poem, is a zither with too many strings. Late Tang writers were indeed drawn to the poetic fragment; what we can see more clearly now is the way they seem haunted as well with a sense of the fragmentation of experience itself.

Robert Ashmore

#### NOTES

1. Such rhyming first lines are optional in all regulated verse, but in practice they are a bit more common in the heptasyllabic forms, where the longer line seems to make it more desirable to establish the rhyme in the first couplet.

2. The exception to this rule occurs in line type II (| | – – | | –), where an oblique-tone third syllable (or first syllable in the pentasyllabic line) requires alteration of the fifth syllable (or third in the pentasyllabic line) from oblique to level tone to preserve euphony. See the discussion on the four *lǔshí/jùeju* line types in chapter 8.

3. In fact, we can see anticipations of what we might call a Song manner in such works by Du Fu. A comparison of this poem with Lin Bu's "Small Plum Tree in a Garden in the Hills, No. 1" (C15.1) suggests some of the "hereditary" connections between Du Fu and Song poetry.

4. For a sense of the literary legacy of these Han sites, see the discussion of Sima Xiangru's "Fu on the Imperial Park" (C3.1).

5. Huang Zhouxing (1611–1680), *Tang shi kuai (Pleasures of Tang Poetry)*, cited in *Tang shi huiping (Collected Commentaries on Tang Poetry)*, ed. Chen Bohai (Hangzhou: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe, 1995), 2:1948.

6. For another classic example of this mode of poetry in the ninth century, see the discussion of Du Mu's heptasyllabic quatrain "Red Cliff" (C10.15).

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## Recent-Style *Shi* Poetry

### Quatrains (*Jueju*)

The two *jueju* quatrain forms, the pentasyllabic *jueju* (*wujue*) and the heptasyllabic *jueju* (*qijue*), are the shortest and most focused forms generally used by the Tang poets. Like the two “regulated verse” (*lǜshī*) forms, which are exactly twice as long, both *wujue* and *qijue* are in the tonally regulated “recent-style poetry” (*jīntī shī*) category. Brevity is both constraining and potentially liberating. It forces writers to pare every topic down to a few essential images, and then to harmoniously arrange them subordinate to a single controlling theme: “*Jueju* contain only four lines and not much space, so every line and every character must have meaning and flavor. Poems cannot bear even the least brushstroke of floating mist [words and phrases not to the point] or wasted ink.”<sup>1</sup> Brevity also encouraged the projection of meaning beyond the literal text by the reliance on symbolic poetic language and the development of artful structural techniques. Gao Buying (1875–1940) explained: “The number of characters in *jueju* is not large, so if the meaning becomes exhausted then the spirit will be withered; if the language is obvious then the flavor will be short-lived. Only continual suggestiveness can make people lower their heads and imagine endlessly. This is the Greater Vehicle.”<sup>2</sup> Many traditional critics thus considered the two *jueju* forms to be the most difficult. Tang poets reveled in the challenge “to see big within small” (*xiaozhong jianda*) and so used *jueju* for the weightiest of topics: presentations of philosophical or religious states, expressions of fundamental emotions, reflections on history, descriptions of vast landscapes, and so on. As with other Tang poetry, the general tendency was to merge themes of the natural world with those of personal states of

mind—often described as a “fusion of feeling and scene” (*qing jing jiao rong*). Yet, when successful, *jueju* could reach a level of intensity unparalleled by poems in longer forms. One might say that the best *jueju* are short bursts of flame, as compared with the slow smolder of longer poems.

The term *jueju* literally means “cut-off lines,” and it was believed by many critics that this meant the *wujue* and *qijue* forms had originated as quatrain segments cut from the eight-line *lüshi* forms. Adherents of this reductive view posited that the truncation of *lüshi* yielded four structural possibilities for *jueju*:

1. Where neither couplet is parallel, the structure constitutes the two outer couplets of *lüshi*.
2. Where both couplets are parallel, it constitutes the two middle couplets of *lüshi*.
3. Where the first couplet is nonparallel and the second parallel, it constitutes the first half of *lüshi*.
4. Where the first couplet is parallel and the second nonparallel, it constitutes the second half of *lüshi*.

A major implication is that *jueju* aesthetics also derived from those of *lüshi*. However, it is now generally accepted that the term *jueju* dates to earlier than the advent of *lüshi* and was related to the Six Dynasties practice of multiple authors’ composing pentasyllabic “linked verse” (*lianju*). When an individual quatrain segment was taken out of context of a *lianju*, or if it never had other quatrains linked to it, then it was called cut-off lines (*jueju*) or broken lines (*duanju*). Moreover, the fixed-length quatrain form long predated the fixed-length octet. Although the truncated *lüshi* theory is ahistorical, there is no doubt it influenced the interpretation and composition of *jueju* during the Song and later dynasties. Yet, for reading Tang poetry, we can start from the premise that *jueju* development and aesthetics are independent of the *lüshi* forms.<sup>3</sup>

I begin this chapter with close readings of representative poems, to provide readers a sense of the thematic scope and aesthetic potential of *jueju*. A detailed examination of common *jueju* features then follows.

#### WUJUE

Although Tang poets all used *wujue* to record concentrated poetic

experience, and pursued the same fundamental aesthetic goals for the form, differing styles of poems can be discerned. Here I present two basic styles of Tang *wujue*, differentiated primarily by the choice of themes and the type of language employed. The first can be called a “colloquial style” and the second a “descriptive style,” although both terms require qualification. For a context in which to approach these styles, a brief look back at pentasyllabic quatrain composition in the Six Dynasties period (222–618) is helpful.

Six Dynasties *yuefu* songs were a major source for *wujue*. These anonymous songs fall into three subcategories: “Wu songs of the Jiangnan region” (*Jiangnan Wu sheng*), from the southern capital area (present-day Nanjing); “western songs of Jing and Chu” (*Jing Chu xisheng*), from the area around the confluence of the Yangtze and Han rivers (present-day Wuhan); and “songs accompanied by drum, horn, and transverse flute” (*gu jiao hengchui qu*), from the north. These quatrains, predominantly love songs in a first-person female voice, were cited as a source for Tang *wujue* by literary historians as early as Gao Bing (1350–1423) and Hu Yinglin (1551–1602). Thematically, the songs are limited mainly to broken love affairs—and the occasional happy reunion. Description of the settings and characters is also quite limited. The language is colloquial, direct, and highly emotionally charged. Analysis of linguistic elements suggests the oral performance milieu: the extant texts are characterized by strong and continuous syntax, a use of first- and second-person pronouns, and often puns. Most tellingly, a continual use of the linguistic categories of deixis and modality gives the impression of direct speech. Deixis includes words and expressions that are ambiguous without specific knowledge of the context of the speech act (for example, “Hey you! Bring *that* over *here*!”).<sup>4</sup> Modality refers to subjectivity of expressions, as inferences, conditionals, imperatives, questions, and so on; it is the grammaticalization of speakers’ subjective attitudes and opinions.<sup>5</sup>

Colloquial elements in the songs also created a tone and pace starkly different from those in contemporary *shi*, which strongly influenced the course of *wujue* (and *qijue*) development. In languages that use alphabets, the distinction between written and spoken forms at any one time is not that great; the written generally follows the vernacular and remains a language of action and direct communication. However, Chinese characters do not spell out spoken words, but are symbols for words; this fact allowed the classical written and the vernacular forms

semi-independent evolutions. Classical Chinese did not develop in the direction of easy communicability or even clear referentiality, but toward dense, concise, and erudite presentation. It tended toward monosyllabism and was undergrammaticalized and ambiguous relative to the spoken language. Thus the injection of vernacular elements into *jueju* had the effect of considerably lightening the tone and speeding the pace relative to denser forms like *lǔshi*.

Another product of Six Dynasties *yuefu* music was the fixed-length pentasyllabic quatrain form itself: it appears that popular southern musical tunes and phrasing dictated the length. A singer standing in front of an audience creates a context full of dramatic potential. The language and phrasing used are designed for maximum emotional impact. The fixed-length quatrain form of Six Dynasties music required the singer to say more by saying less and so was the catalyst for the gradual invention of standard compositional formulas that relied on implicit suggestion. Fixed length had not heretofore been a feature of Chinese poetry. It can reasonably be argued that experimentation with quatrains in the Six Dynasties led to interest in the fixed-length octet and eventually the development of the *lǔshi* forms.

One Six Dynasties technique to overcome short fixed length was to employ clever homonym puns in the final couplet of quatrains, which, depending on which side of the pun one considered, cast the lines in wholly different ways. Consider the following couplet from a “Ziye ge” (Ziye Song):

bright	lamp	shine	empty	game	明燈照空局	(míng dēng zhào kōng jú)
distant	-like	no	have	chess	悠然未有棋	(yōu rán wèi yǒu qí)

The lines can be rendered, “The bright lamp shines on the empty chessboard /—For a long time there won’t be any game.” Yet when puns in the last line are factored in, it also reads, “The oil burns on but no date [for our reunion] has been set.”<sup>6</sup> Other Six Dynasties songs omit puns, but the goal of projecting meaning and emotional resonance beyond the literal words remains intrinsic.

A representative example of Six Dynasties *yuefu* songs is another “Ziye Song”:

## C10.1

### Ziye Song

Whence have you come my love  
 That you wear such a melancholy look?  
 Three times I call, but not a single response—  
 Why can't men be constant as pine and cypress?

[XQHWJNBCS 2:1042]

					子夜歌	(zǐyè gē)
love (you)	from	what	place	come	歡從何處來	(huān cóng hé chù lái)
truly	—	have	pensive	look	端然有憂色	(duān rán yǒu yōu sè)
three	call	no	one	answer	三喚不一應	(sān huàn bù yí yīng)
have	how	compare	pine	cypress	有何比松柏	(yǒu hé bǐ sōng bǎo)

In the space of a four-line speech act, the mood of the singer changes completely, from concerned solicitude for her lover to resignation or even anger at his (apparent) betrayal.

Six Dynasties literati *shi* poets also adopted the pentasyllabic quatrain form and explored its potential. Yet, stylistically, their written quatrain-length *shi* are almost the opposite of the *yuefu* quatrain songs. Like longer contemporary *shi* poetry, these quatrains are in a descriptive mode, aiming toward what the critic **Zhong Rong** (fl. 502–509) called “artful structure and descriptive similitude” (*qiaogou xingsi*).<sup>7</sup> Such poems create a vibrant verbal texture (often through parallelism) but maintain a somewhat neutral or distanced emotional stance. This effect is in part due to the fact that the writers tended to avoid the use of grammatical function words, which were considered “empty words” (*xuzi*), in favor of “content words” (*shizi*)—nouns, verbs, adjectives, and so on. The goal was to encompass objective reality through written patterning. Declarative statements dominate, and images are chosen primarily to appeal to the visual sense—in aggregate, to paint mental pictures with words. Yet, what such language may lack in personal tone, it more than makes up for in philosophical/cosmological resonance, for it developed in the context of nature poetry by poets such as **Xie Lingyun** (385–433 [chap. 6]). The poem “In Praise of Pear Blossoms on the Pond,” by Wang Rong (468–494), typifies the literary quatrain style:

## C10.2

### In Praise of Pear Blossoms on the Pond



On ruined steps they cover the fine grass  
 In pooled water they scatter among the duckweed  
 Fragrant spring shines on flowing snow  
 Deep night reflects myriad stars

[XQHWJNBCS 2:1403]

詠池上梨花詩 (yǒng chí shàng lí huā shī)

overturn	steps	cover	fine	grass	翻階沒細草	(fān jiē mò xì cǎo)
accumulate	water	divide	sparse	duckweed	集水間疏萍	(jí shuǐ jiàn shū píng)
fragrant	spring	shine	flowing	snow	芳春照流雪	(fāng chūn zhào liú xuě)
deep	night	reflect	many	star	深夕映繁星	(shēn xī yìng fán xīng)

The transformation of the pear blossom petals floating in the wind to snow and stars is both striking and beautiful. The lines in each couplet are strictly parallel, but the language evokes an element of dynamism due to the use of strong verbs in the third position in every line—such key words were termed *juyan* (verse eyes) by later critics.

The same literati poets who wrote *shi* quatrains were also a major audience for the *yuefu* songs. Cross-fertilization was both natural and inevitable. *Yuefu* quatrain songs by named authors incorporate descriptive language (including parallelism) more than do most of the anonymous songs. And as time went on, *shi* quatrains increasingly exhibited elements derived from the subjective voice of the *yuefu* singer. In particular, **Yu Xin** (513–581) did much to transform the literati pentasyllabic quatrain into a medium for personal statement; his works can be considered precursors of many Tang *wujue*.<sup>8</sup>

Both of the two proposed styles of Tang *wujue* build on Six Dynasties antecedents, but in different ways. Colloquial-style quatrains hark back directly to the Six Dynasties songs by presenting archetypal *yuefu* characters in dramatic situations using a first-person colloquial voice to express fundamental emotions. Often such Tang quatrains are “ancient *jueju*” (*gujue*), a term applied by commentators such as Wang Li to the minority of *jueju* that do not follow the rules of tonal prosody or use oblique-tone rhymes.<sup>9</sup> The reason for bypassing the tonal patterns appears to have been a conscious attempt by poets to evoke an archaic flavor in their verse. Yet the colloquial style is reflected in many proper *wujue* poems as well—it is theme and voice that dictate their inclusion.



Two colloquial-style quatrains are presented, given pride of place at the outset. It should be noted, however, that it is unlikely that these poems were actually *sung* in the Tang. The musical tradition of Six Dynasties pentasyllabic quatrains—and that of the old **Han yuefu** as well—had all but died out by the Early Tang dynasty. Poets were making use of the ready-made resonance of old *yuefu* as source material for new kinds of poetry.

The descriptive style in fact is more prevalent in Tang *wujue* composition. It can be explained as a hybrid that merges the descriptive and visual power of *shi* with the emotional voice of the *yuefu* singer. One compositional method dominates: the first couplet is devoted to a description of images and often demonstrates parallelism; the second couplet is a continuous syntactic proposition and frequently exhibits deixis and modality. The first couplet is generally in the declarative mode and provides the setting or necessary background information for the second couplet. In the second couplet, the emphasis is on the subjective evaluation of all of the poem's imagery. The voice of the singer is internalized by the poet and becomes less stridently expressive and more subtly reflective. Strong emotion remains, but it is generally presented through indirection and understatement.

A premier example of the colloquial-style *wujue* is “Spring Lament,” by Jin Changxu (fl. 713–742). No other poem by Jin Changxu is extant, and he is a virtual unknown. Yet this poem struck a chord with readers and was held up by some as *the* model for *jueju* composition.

### **C10.3**

#### **Spring Lament**

Hit the yellow oriole  
Don't let it sing on the branches  
When it sings, it breaks into my dreams  
And keeps me from Liaoxi!

[QTS 22:768.8724; QSTRJJ, 219–221]

					春怨	(chūn yuàn)
hit	up	yellow	oriole	[suffix]	打起黃鶯兒	(dǎ qǐ huáng yīng ér)
do not	let	branch	top	call	莫教枝上啼	(mò jiào zhī shàng tí)
call	time	startle	my	dream	啼時驚妾夢	(tí shí jīng qiè mèng)
not	get	arrive	Liao	-xi	不得到遼西	(bù dé dào liáo xī)

[Tonal pattern 1a (imperfect), see p. 171]

The Qing dynasty critic Shen Deqian said of this poem, “It proceeds continuously in a single breath.”<sup>10</sup> Strong, forward-moving syntax is evident in every line, and each couplet is a complete sentence. The point where one couplet ends and the next begins potentially could mark a break in continuity and thus retard the flow of a poem; this poem adopts the common solution of repeating the character in the last position of one couplet in the first position of the next. Further, the *eight* verbs (out of twenty characters!) give the language dynamism and power. The first-person pronoun *qiè* (a humble form used by women) and the modal constructions in line 1 (*dǎqǐ* [hit], an imperative), line 2 (*mò jiào* [don’t let], a negative imperative), and line 4 (*bù dé* [cannot get], a judgment concerning ability) emphasize the voice of the speaker/singer and tie the poem to the earlier tradition of performed *yuefu* poetry. The impression is of a voice from the heart.

Thematically, the poem is firmly in the *yuefu* tradition. An archetypal lonely woman despairs over the fate of her absent husband or lover, who is gone to be a soldier on the border. Liaoxi refers to the region to the west of the Liao River, in present-day Inner Mongolia. Only in dreams are they together—until she is rudely awakened by the oriole. The poem seems just that simple, but the image of the oriole in fact carries subtle associations. On one level, the springtime bird is certainly calling its mate to the nest; this symbol of togetherness is in ironic contrast to the woman’s lonely state. Yet on another, more disturbing level, the image may allude to poem no. 131 in the ***Shijing*** (*The Book of Poetry*), in which the song of the oriole is a harbinger of the death of warriors for their lord. Thus the bird not only keeps the lonely woman from dreams of happiness but also represents her worst fears.

**Wang Wei** (701–761) is universally recognized as a master of *wujue*, particularly for his limpid landscape descriptions, which often contain Buddhist allegories. Yet the few colloquial-style quatrains he composed

are also justly famous. He writes of lovers' separation, this time from the man's point of view, in the second of three "Miscellaneous Poems":

#### C10.4

#### Miscellaneous Poems, No. 2

You've come from our hometown  
And must know what's happening there  
The day you left, by the patterned window  
Was the cold plum tree in bloom?

[QTS 4:128.1304; QSTRJJ, 107–108]

					雜詩	(zá shī)
you	from	old	hometown	come	君自故鄉來	(jūn zì gù xiāng lái)
should	know	old	hometown	affairs	應知故鄉事	(yīng zhī gù xiāng shì)
come	day	patterned	window	front	來日綺窗前	(lái rì qǐ chuāng qián)
cold	plum	blossom	flower	not	寒梅著花未	(hán méi zhuó huā wèi)

By addressing the poem to the second-person pronoun *jun*, a dramatic situation with two actors is created, with the poet taking the speaking role. An impression of direct and natural speech is given by the strong syntax used throughout and the use of grammatical function words—the preposition *zi* (from) and the negative question word *wei*. The repetition of *guxiang* (hometown) in lines 1 and 2 and *lai* (to come) in lines 1 and 3 imparts a sense of informality to the speaker's words and emphasizes the linguistic continuity. The words *jun*, *guxiang*, and *lairi* (come day; that is, the day of departure) are examples of deixis (person deixis, place deixis, and time deixis, respectively), as their exact referents require knowledge of the speech context. The inference in line 2 and the question in line 4 are modal statements that imply a speaker as point of reference.

The subtle emotion of the second couplet is what makes this poem memorable. In line 3, the word *qichuang* (patterned window; that is, a window with delicately carved or latticed decoration that makes it resemble *qi* [patterned silk]) almost certainly refers to a woman's boudoir. We assume that the occupant is the speaker's wife or lover, from whom he is separated. The question in line 4 is thus projected onto the personal

level. The “cold plum” becomes a symbol of the couple’s love, which has endured separation the way plum trees endure the cold of winter. The rest of the question reveals the speaker’s anxiety about the continuing strength of this love: his asking whether the flowers bloom is an indirect way of asking whether his wife’s or lover’s feelings are as strong as before.

A representative example of quatrains in the descriptive style is Wang Zhihuan’s (688–742) famous “Climbing Crane Tower”:

### C10.5 Climbing Crane Tower

White sun rests on mountains—and is gone  
 Yellow River enters sea—and flows on  
 If you want to see a further thousand miles:  
 Climb another story in the tower

[QTS 8:253.2849; QSTRJJ, 54–56]

					登鵲雀樓	( <i>dēng què què lóu</i> )
white	sun	rest	mountain	extinguish	白日依山盡	( <i>bái rì yī shān jìn</i> )
yellow	river	enter	ocean	flow	黃河入海流	( <i>huáng hé rù hǎi liú</i> )
want	exhaust	thousand	mile	sight	欲窮千里目	( <i>yù qióng qiān lǐ mù</i> )
again	ascend	one	story	tower	更上一層樓	( <i>gèng shàng yì céng lóu</i> )

[Tonal pattern I, see p. 170]

Crane Tower commanded a vista from a bend in the Yellow River, at a site in present-day Yongji, Shanxi Province. On one level, this is a simple landscape poem, in praise of the view. Yet when we analyze the relationships between the images in the parallel first couplet in the light of the modal conditional proposition in the second couplet, our thoughts may shift to the metaphysical realm.<sup>11</sup> The permanence of mountains is paired with the transience of water, the light of day with the dark of night, and the termination of movement (resting, disappearing) with continuing movement (entering, flowing). A cosmological cycle of yin and yang is described. Indeed, we might go further: we are exactly at the midpoint in the cycle when yang yields to yin—the point of balance. The first couplet thereby creates a seemingly complete conception of the world, but then

the second couplet asserts that there is an even *greater* view open to those who climb higher in the tower. Implicit is that there is a truth about the cosmos that is beyond our normal understanding. There is a Tang dynasty basis for this interpretation: Guifeng Zongmi (780–841), both a patriarch of Huayan Buddhism and a major Chan (Zen) master, uses the analogy of climbing a nine-story tower to describe the relationship between cultivation and enlightenment.<sup>12</sup>

Wang Wei shared with **Tao Qian** (Tao Yuanming, 365?–427) a love of nature and a frequent tendency to use natural description as a springboard to philosophical and religious investigation. “Most mature nature poetry ... would seem to look upon the configurations of landscape as symbols charged with a mysterious power.”<sup>13</sup> While Tao Qian was a follower of the Daoist philosophers, Wang Wei was a devout Buddhist—he studied with the Chan master Daoguang for ten years and even converted part of his country estate into a monastery. His landscape poems are characterized by an integrated minimalism: in them, nature is distilled to a few essential images, which are harmoniously arranged in a balanced and stable whole that yet pulses with the energy of their interrelationships. Nature is the main actor; the poet becomes a distanced observer, or even seems to be absent. An overall impression of direct and unmediated reality is imparted, although in fact the landscapes are idealizations created by Wang Wei’s poetic imagination. He carefully chooses his images to appeal to the senses, primarily the eye; this has given rise to an oft-repeated maxim about Wang Wei: “In his poems, there are paintings” (*shizhong you hua*). Following are two fine examples of his landscape *wujue*; the first, “The Deer Fence,” is from his famous “Wang River Collection,” which describes sites at his estate at Lantian, south of the Tang capital of Chang’an (present-day Xi’an, Shaanxi Province):

## **C10.6**

### **The Deer Fence**

On the empty mountain, no one is seen  
But the sound of voices is heard  
Returning: light enters the deep forest  
Again: it shines on the green moss

[QTS 4:128.1300; QSTRJJ, 112–113]

					鹿柴	(lù zhài)
empty	mountain	no	see	man	空山不見人	(kōng shān bú jiàn rén)
only	hear	person	language	sound	但聞人語響	(dàn wén rén yǔ xiǎng)
return	reflection	enter	deep	forest	返景入深林	(fǎn yǐng rù shēn lín)
again	shine	green	moss	top	復照青苔上	(fù zhào qīng tāi shàng)

This deceptively simple poem is in fact more difficult than it looks—one book discusses how nineteen different translators have rendered it in nineteen different ways! <sup>14</sup>

What is an “empty mountain”? Clearly it is not barren, as we are informed that there is a “deep forest” there. *Kong* (empty) is the Chinese translation of the Sanskrit Buddhist term *śūnyatā*. Primarily the word is a negation, a denial that phenomena have self-existence—that is, permanence independent of causes and conditions. Yet emptiness does not imply nihilism, for it is also “empty.” Rather, it is a practical term that has meaning only in the context of salvation; in Edward Conze’s description, through the exercise of wisdom (*prajñā*), the practitioner negates the world and thereby gains emancipation from it.<sup>15</sup> Paul Williams has explained: “To see entities as empty is to see them as mental constructs, not existing from their own side and therefore *in that respect* like illusions and hallucinatory objects....Emptiness is the ultimate truth (*paramārthasatya*) in this tradition in the sense that it is what is ultimately true about the object being analyzed, whatever that object may be.”<sup>16</sup> Meditation on emptiness leads to the realization of the only permanence or self-existence, which is variously called the dharma body or law body of the Buddha (*dharmakāya*), the Buddha realm (*dharmadhātu*), or enlightenment, *nirvāṇa*. Thus Wang Wei’s “empty mountain” is the mountain as it *really is* from the perspective of an enlightened person. The first couplet as a whole affirms that this truth is not distant from our human world—it is indeed right here among us. The schools of Chinese Buddhism followed the traditional Indian Mādhyamaka (Middle Way) understanding that the true nature of phenomena is nondual: all things lie somewhere between the extremes of being and nonbeing. This is as true for the unconditioned law body as it is for things in this conditioned world—thus there is no possible separation between *nirvāṇa* (the other shore, or enlightenment) and *saṃsāra* (this shore, or the world of suffering, the round of rebirth). Looked at from another perspective, both *nirvāṇa* and *saṃsāra* are

empty; thus both are the same. The implication is that all things are related and all are interpenetrated by the law body. Enlightenment is not transcending one reality to reach another, but is the discovery of the law body within *this* reality.

The second couplet—as always in *jueju*—is dominant. Why is the light *returning* and shining *again* on the green moss? Consider that in a dense forest on a mountainside, logically the only times during the day when moss on the forest floor might be illuminated are sunrise and/or sunset, when light can shine in underneath the tree canopy. The description Wang Wei presents suggests that this is part of his meaning: *fanying* (returning light) <sup>17</sup> recalls the phrase *huiguang fanzhao* (returning light shining back), which refers to the glow of colored light in the sky right at sunset. There is something suggestive about the scene: the light seems to *purposefully* illuminate the moss, over and over again. Both the light and the moss become important symbols—but for what?

An enlightenment metaphor is at work here. The interpenetration of *nirvāṇa* and *saṃsāra* suggests that the law body is innate within us. Indian writers termed this aspect *tathāgatagarbha* (Buddha essence, Buddha nature) and held that it is a common possession of all sentient beings. This Buddha nature is, on the one hand, what makes us yearn for *nirvāṇa* in the first place and, on the other, what makes it possible for us to reach it. Enlightenment does not produce anything; instead, it is a paring away of illusions (caused by ignorance) to reveal the Buddha already within us.<sup>18</sup> Chinese Buddhists referred to this realization in many ways, one of which was the borrowed term *huiguang fanzhao*—here, the returning light shining back illuminates one's original nature.

That explains the light, but what of the moss? One feature of early Chinese Buddhism was an expansion of the scope of *tathāgatagarbha*: it came to be viewed as the common endowment of not only sentient beings, but also nonsentient things.<sup>19</sup> The idea is implicit in several sutras, but it became a major focus in China, particularly through the influential teachings of the Huayan school. Conze has summarized basic Huayan thought as follows:

Each particle of dust contains in itself all the Buddha-fields and the whole extent of the Dharma-element; every single thought refers to all that was, is and will be; and the eternal mysterious Dharma can be beheld everywhere, because it is equally reflected in all parts of this



universe. Each particle of dust is also capable of generating all possible kinds of virtue, and therefore one single object may lead to the unfolding of all the secrets of the entire universe.<sup>20</sup>

Although moss is perhaps the most insignificant thing in the forest, Wang Wei presents it as a symbol of absolute truth.

With the previous poem in mind, even a glance at the following *wujue*, “Calling-Bird Brook,” suggests its Buddhist overtones:

### C10.7 Calling-Bird Brook

Man quiet: sweet osmanthus falls  
Night tranquil: the spring mountain empties  
The rising moon startles mountain birds  
Which call awhile in the spring stream

[QTS 4:128.1302; QSTRJJ, 119–120]

					鳥鳴澗	(niǎo míng jiàn)
person	quiet	osmanthus	flower	fall	人間桂花落	(rén xiān guì huā luò)
night	tranquil	spring	mountain	empty	夜靜春山空	(yè jìng chūn shān kōng)
moon	appear	startle	mountain	bird	月出驚山鳥	(yuè chū jīng shān niǎo)
often	call	spring	brook	within	時鳴春澗中	(shí míng chūn jiàn zhōng)

[Tonal pattern II (imperfect), see p. 170]

Both the emptiness of the mountain in spring and moonlight so powerful that it startles birds in the spring stream can be readily interpreted as Buddhist metaphors. Let us look closely at only the first couplet, as it introduces an aspect of Buddhist thought and practice not yet mentioned. The couplet is strictly parallel and made up of only content words (*shizi*). Thus the relationships between the images are suggested through juxtaposition and not grammatically marked. Although we could read each of the two lines as simply additive, I prefer to read each as a cause-effect proposition (*because* the man is quiet, *therefore* the sweet osmanthus falls; *because* the night is tranquil, *therefore* the spring mountain is empty). Such an interpretation is in keeping with ideas about meditation practice contemporary to Wang Wei. The major influence on



Early and Middle Tang Buddhism in this regard came from the Tiantai school, whose founder, Zhiyi (538–597), had reformulated and systematized earlier Hinayana meditation techniques and set them firmly in a Mahayana context. Practice revolved around the dynamic relationship between *zhi* (*śamatha* [cessation, calming]) and *guan* (*vipaśyanā* [insight, contemplation]). The two always go together. In Zhiyi's words, “*śamatha* (or *zhi*) is the hand that holds the clump of grass, *vipaśyanā* (or *guan*) the sickle that cuts it down.”<sup>21</sup> In Wang Wei's poem, “man quiet” and “night tranquil” are *zhi*, and “osmanthus falls” and “spring mountain empties” are *guan*. Cessation of mental activity allows the poet to experience true reality. When the realization of emptiness is attained, out comes the bright moon of enlightenment.

**Li Bai** (701–762)—brilliant, insouciant, frequently inebriated, and mostly unemployed—was a master of both the *wujue* and *qijue* forms. His “Quiet Night Thoughts” exemplifies perfect control of structure to create a suggestive closure:

### C10.8 Quiet Night Thoughts

Before my bed, the bright moonlight  
I mistake it for frost on the ground  
Raising my head, I stare at the bright moon;  
Lowering my head, I think of home

[QSTRJJ, 146–147; QTS 5:165.1709]

					靜夜思	(jìng yè sī)
bed	front	bright	moon	shine	床前明月光	(chuáng qián míng yuè guāng)
suspect	is	ground	top	frost	疑是地上霜	(yí shì dì shàng shuāng)
raise	head	gaze	bright	moon	舉頭望明月	(jǔ tóu wàng míng yuè)
lower	head	think	old	hometown	低頭思故鄉	(dī tóu sī gù xiāng)

The first couplet presents an arresting image: the poet is awakened by brightness streaming in the window, and he misinterprets its origin. The moon up above seems to him to be the reflection of frost down below. The second couplet ties the images of moon and frost to the poet's homesickness and thereby makes them significant. Repeating *mingyue* (bright moon), line 3 directly refers to line 1. As line 3 directly refers to

line 1, we expect line 4 to refer to line 2. That is, line 4 will in some manner concern frost on the ground. Frost is not mentioned directly, but with the poet's lowering his head, it is implied. This is because the first couplet has presented a two-part visual scene in which the moon is *above* and the frost is *below*. The second couplet repeats the first half of this pattern in line 3—the poet looks *up* to see the moon. In line 4, the poet looks *down*, and so we assume the rest of the pattern. The round (full) moon, which in Chinese poetry often carries connotations of unity and family togetherness, has caused the traveler to lower his head and think of home. Yet his thoughts are permeated by the frost, now transformed into a symbol of his homesickness and still carrying its connotations of coldness, harshness, and destructiveness. Thus the poem has very subtly projected us into the poet's raw emotional state. The first couplet provides the images and structural pattern that are the backbone of the second couplet. However, the second couplet is dominant, as it reinterprets what has come before.

By far, Li Bai's favorite topic was Li Bai. More than any other Tang poet, he created a recognizable poetic persona, a free-spirited, spontaneous, larger-than-life bohemian. This persona is reflected in "Amusing Myself":

## C10.9

### Amusing Myself

Facing wine—I don't notice the dusk

Falling flowers cover my robe

Drunkenly I rise, and walk with the moon in the stream

Birds have gone back, and people are few

[QTS 6:182.1858; QSTRJJ, 155–156]

					自遣	(zì qiǎn)
face	wine	not	realize	dark	對酒不覺暝	(duì jiǔ bù jué míng)
fall	flower	fill	my	robe	落花盈我衣	(luò huā yíng wǒ yī)
drunk	arise	pace	stream	moon	醉起步溪月	(zuì qǐ bù xī yuè)
bird	return	person	also	few	鳥還人亦稀	(niǎo huán rén yì xī)

Li Bai presents himself as a figure of fun—the drunken poet covered in flowers and following the moon's reflection in the stream. The vignette is

utterly charming. Yet poems like this should make us ask ourselves: Is the Li Bai who appears in his poems the real Li Bai or a fictional construct? This is an important issue in the Chinese context, as the root of the poetic impulse is said to be *shi yan zhi* (poetry expresses intent), which would suggest that poems are always spontaneous, true reflections of the writer's inner being.

Let us read one more *wujue* poem by Li Bai. The lonely woman figure in *yuefu* was not limited to the common folk. The abandoned palace lady offered a host of new possibilities, particularly for rich description. The prototypical lady of this type was Ban Jieyu, once the favored consort of Emperor Cheng (r. 32–6 B.C.E.) of the Western Han dynasty. She was displaced when the emperor became infatuated with the lovely Zhao Feiyan and her sister. Fearing jealous recriminations, she retired to serve the dowager empress in Changxin Hall, a separate building within the Changle Palace complex. A poem attributed to Ban Jieyu describes her love as like a round silk fan, pure and white as snow, which is put away in a box when the chill of autumn comes.<sup>22</sup> The story and poem became the basis for a host of *yuefu* compositions by later writers, under titles such as “Jieyu’s Lament” and “Changxin Lament.” I discuss a series of poems about Ban Jieyu in the following *qijue* section of this chapter. Li Bai’s “Lament of the Jade Stairs” is a contribution to the tradition. Although the *theme* of this poem derives from the ancient *yuefu* tradition, the *language* places it squarely in the descriptive style of *wujue*:

### C10.10

#### Lament of the Jade Stairs

On jade stairs, the rising white dew  
Through the long night pierces silken hose  
Retreating inside, she lowers crystal shades  
And stares at the glimmering autumn moon

[QTS 5:164.1701; QSTRJJ, 143–145]

					玉階怨	(yù jiē yuàn)
jade	stair	bears	white	dew	玉階生白露	(yù jiē shēng bái lù)
night	long	encroach	silk	stocking	夜久侵羅襪	(yè jiǔ qīn luó wà)
withdraw	lower	water	crystal	blind	卻下水晶簾	(què xià shuǐ jīng lián)
glittering	glittering	gaze	autumn	moon	玲瓏望秋月	(líng lóng wàng qiū yuè)

Li Bai's poem is in part a tribute to the Six Dynasties poet **Xie Tiao** (464–499), whom he much admired. Xie Tiao had also composed a poem on the theme, “Jade Stairs Resentment” (C7.2). Although lovely, Xie Tiao's work is much simpler than Li Bai's. Li Bai borrows several elements—the lady's sleepless night, the jeweled blinds, the glittering light, silk clothing—and creates a masterwork through the subtle interplay of the images.

Li Bai's lines describe the palace lady in terms of both her languor and her obsession with the past. Despite her opulent surroundings and dress, she feels only sorrow as, under the light of the moon, she stares over the palace walls to where the emperor dwells. The poem presents the constancy of her love, by means of her long, sleepless watch from the courtyard and the boudoir; the fickleness of the emperor is only suggested by contrast. The full moon is the key, not only because it is generally a symbol for family reunion but also more specifically because in the *shi* poem attributed to her, Ban Jieyu had written:

Newly cut, fine white silk  
 Fresh and pure as frost and snow  
 I sew it into a “togetherness fan”  
 Round, round like the bright moon.

She had given it to the emperor, who cast it aside when the warmth of their relationship was replaced by the cool of autumn. Thus the “autumn moon” in Li Bai's poem is an ironic symbol of her abandonment. The glittering of the “crystal shades,” which scatter the moonlight into a thousand stars, recalls the drops of dew on “jade stairs” in line 1—or is it that both the crystal and the dewdrops suggest that she stares through the window with eyes filled with tears?

#### QIJUE

Although a small number of Six Dynasties heptasyllabic quatrains are

extant, and Early Tang poets experimented with the form, stylistically mature *qijue* poetry was an invention of the High Tang poets, most notably **Wang Changling** (698–ca. 755) and Li Bai. *Qijue* developed along with Tang popular music, for which it was the major song form. Thus initially the thematic scope was narrow: *qijue* lyrics were generally limited to popular *yuefu* themes (which, for the Tang, can be roughly divided into frontier songs about homesick soldiers and boudoir songs about abandoned ladies) and those describing parting from friends and loved ones. Only gradually did the scope of *qijue* themes expand, until by the Middle and Late Tang, the form had become a flexible tool for personal expression.

Let us look at one of Wang Changling's frontier poems, from a set called "Following the Army":

## C10.11

### Following the Army

Signal fires west of the wall, hundred-foot watchtowers  
 Climbing alone at dusk—an autumn of desert wind  
 What's more—"Mountain Pass Moon" plays on a nomad flute  
 No way to reach the golden chamber, past ten thousand miles of  
 sadness

[QTS 4:143.1443–1444; QSTRJJ, 77–80]

							從軍行	(cóng jūn xíng)
signal	fire	city/wall	west	hundred	foot	tower	烽火城西百尺樓	(fēng huǒ chéng xī bǎi chǐ lóu)
yellow	dusk	alone	sit	ocean	wind	autumn	黃昏獨上海風秋	(huáng hūn dú shàng hǎi fēng qiū)
again	blow	nomad	flute	pass	mountain	moon	更吹羌笛關山月	(gèng chuī qiāng dí guān shān yuè)
no	way	gold	chamber	ten thousand	mile	sadness	無那金閨萬里愁	(wú nà jīn guī wàn lǐ chóu)

[Tonal pattern IIa, see p. 171]

Typically, the poem presents no actual warfare; *qijue* poets were more interested in the emotions of the soldiers when in moments of rest *between* battles. A secondary interest was the great desert itself, which had a strangely romantic attraction for the city dwellers of Chang'an. Wang Changling liberally spices his *qijue* with Central Asian geographic names, nomadic accoutrements, and bleak vistas. In this poem, a soldier climbs a tower to look back toward his home in China; when he hears

“Mountain Pass Moon” (a song associated with homesickness), he despairs of the distance to the “golden chamber” where his wife or lover waits. The huge landscape between them is suddenly suffused with their mutual pain.

One of Wang Changling’s innovations was the *qijue* poem series, a useful means to overcome the brevity of the form. Each stanza is a complete *qijue*, but when all are read together, there is an exponential buildup of emotional resonance. Whereas the total length is similar to that of heptasyllabic ancient poetry (*qigu*), the effect of the presentation is quite different: the *qijue* series comprises multiple moments of great intensity. A fine example is Wang Changling’s five-poem series “Autumn Songs of the Hall of Abiding Faith,” which is his version of the Ban Jieyu theme:

### **C10.12**

#### **Autumn Songs of the Hall of Abiding Faith**

On the paulownia by the golden well, autumn leaves have yellowed  
The pearl blinds are not rolled against the night-coming frost  
By fragrant drying rack and jade pillow, her face is pale  
She lies listening to the south palace clock—clear drops without end

An autumn wash stone by the high hall sounds far into the night  
Deep frost still recalls the chill of an imperial robe  
Beside silver lantern and painted door lock—she puts aside her  
    sewing  
And looks toward the golden city, and her Bright Lord

Clutching a broom at daybreak, she opens the golden hall  
Then, clasping her round moon fan, she wanders for a while  
Her jade face can’t compare with the brightness of cold crows  
Which still carry reflections of the sun at Zhaoyang Palace

Obsessed with thoughts of a truly ill-fated life  
In dreams seeing her lord, and upon waking, almost believing  
Torches shine in the western palace, proof of night revels  
In palace corridors this night, clearly someone has found favor

The autumn moon is bright within Changxin Hall  
 The slapping sound of washing clothes below Zhaoyang Palace  
 In a mansion of white dew—traces of thin grass  
 Under a canopy of red silk—limitless feelings

[QTS 4:143.1445]

長信秋詞五首

(*cháng xìn qiū cí*)

gold	well	paulownia	—	autumn	leaf	yellow	金井梧桐秋葉黃 ( <i>jīn jǐng wú tóng qiū yè huáng</i> )
pearl	blind	not	roll	night	come	frost	珠簾不捲夜來霜 ( <i>zhū lián bù juǎn yè lái shuāng</i> )
smoke	rack	jade	pillow	no	face	color	熏籠玉枕無顏色 ( <i>xūn lóng yù zhěn wú yán sè</i> )
recline	listen	south	palace	clear	drip	long	臥聽南宮清漏長 ( <i>wò tīng nán gōng qīng lòu cháng</i> )
high	palace	autumn	wash stone	sound	night	late	高殿秋砧響夜闌 ( <i>gāo diàn qiū zhēn xiǎng yè lán</i> )
frost	deep	still	remember	imperial	robe	cold	霜深猶憶御衣寒 ( <i>shuāng shēn yóu yì yù yī hán</i> )
silver	lamp	dark	gate	sew	stitch	rest	銀燈青瑱裁縫歇 ( <i>yín dēng qīng suǒ cái féng xiē</i> )

still	toward	gold	city	bright	lord	look	還向金城明主看 (huán xiàng jīn chéng míng zhǔ kàn)
grasp	broom	dawn	bright	gold	palace	open	奉帚平明金殿開 (fèng zhǒu píng míng jīn diàn kāi)
then	hold	round	fan	temporary	pace	roam	且將團扇暫裝回 (qiě jiāng tuán shàn zhàn péi huí)
jade	face	not	match	cold	crow	color	玉顏不及寒鴉色 (yù yán bù jí hán yā sè)
still	carry	Zhao	-yang	sun	reflection	come	猶帶昭陽日影來 (yóu dài zhāo yáng rì yǐng lái)
truly	become	unfortunate	life	long	contemplate	think	真成薄命久尋思 (zhēn chéng bó mìng jiǔ xún sī)
dream	see	lord	king	wake	after	doubt	夢見君王覺後疑 (mèng jiàn jūn wáng jué hòu yí)
fire	shine	west	palace	know	night	drink	火照西宮知夜飲 (huǒ zhào xī gōng zhī yè yǐn)
very	clear	covered	walkway	bestow	favor	time	分明複道奉恩時 (fēn míng fù dào fèng ēn shí)
long	trust	palace	within	autumn	moon	bright	長信宮中秋月明 (cháng xìn gōng zhōng qiū yuè míng)
Zhao	-yang	palace	below	beat	clothes	sound	昭陽殿下擣衣聲 (zhāo yáng diàn xià dǎo yī shēng)
white	dew	hall	within	delicate	grass	trace	白露堂中細草跡 (bái lù táng zhōng xì cǎo jì)
red	silk	canopy	within	not	surpassed	emotion	紅羅帳裏不勝情 (hóng luó zhàng lǐ bú shèng qíng)

[Tonal pattern Ila (poems 1–3), Ia (poem 4), combination of Ila and Ia (imperfect) (poem 5), see p. 171]

The series presents Lady Ban through the course of two nights and a day. The cumulative effect is to show the obsessive quality of her despair and the hellish nature of her existence. Her emotion is in strong contrast to her opulent surroundings, which, as a result, appear as a prison. Solitude and too much time on her hands allow her imagination to run wild; in the fourth poem, she does not actually *know* that the emperor is in the Zhaoyang Palace romancing Zhao Feiyan. The entire series takes place in her fevered mind. Note that the second couplet of the fifth poem uses static parallelism. There is no resolution, no conclusion, for Lady Ban. Moreover, only in this final poem is the tonal prosodic pattern slightly off (it does not follow the *nian* rule [chap. 8]), which gives a disquieting effect.



Poetry of parting is judged by its power to present personal affection in novel ways. A fine example is Li Bai's "Sending Off Meng Haoran to Guangling at Yellow Crane Tower":

### C10.13

#### Sending Off Meng Haoran to Guangling at Yellow Crane Tower

An old friend leaves the west at Yellow Crane Tower  
 And in flower mists of the third month descends to Yangzhou  
 The far shadow of a lone sail is lost in the azure sky  
 I see only the Yangtze River, flowing to the edge of heaven

[QTS 5:174.1785; QSTRJJ, 163–164]

							黃鶴樓送孟浩然之廣陵
							(huáng hè lóu sòng mèng hào rán zhī guǎng líng)
old	friend	west	depart	yellow	crane	tower	故人西辭黃鶴樓 (gù rén xī cí huáng hè lóu)
mist	flower	three	month	descend	Yang	-zhou	煙花三月下揚州 (yān huā sān yuè xià yáng zhōu)
lone	sail	far	reflection	blue	sky	disappear	孤帆遠影碧空盡 (gū fān yuǎn yǐng bì kōng jìn)
only	see	long	river	heaven	horizon	flow	唯見長江天際流 (wéi jiàn cháng jiāng tiān jì liú)

[Tonal pattern 11a (imperfect), see p. 171]

In just a few words, Li Bai evokes the vastness of the Yangtze River. His focus on the river landscape belies his true purpose—expressing his grief at parting from a friend. In line 3, Meng Haoran's boat slowly sails over the horizon, and in line 4, there is only the great river. By subtle implication, Li Bai reveals that he has been standing atop Yellow Crane Tower all the while, watching the scene and thinking of his friend.

The great poet **Du Fu** (712–770) is not well known for his *jueju* quatrains; as the critic Gao Buying put it, "Du Fu's talent encapsulated heaven and sustained the earth; he could not fully bring his strengths to bear in a little quatrain."<sup>23</sup> Yet, in his last years, Du Fu did turn his hand to quatrains, especially *qijue*, and Gao Buying pointed out that the forceful and direct works he produced constituted a new style. By challenging the countervailing aesthetic, it appears that Du Fu was deliberately trying to widen the scope of the *jueju* genre. The following is an example:

### C10.14

### Three Quatrains, No. 3

Palace guards should be heroic and brave—  
Not wild and cruel, like Tangut and Tuyuhun!  
I hear they're killing men up on the Han River;  
Many girls and women are in the army camps

[QTS 7:229.2490; QSTRJJ, 252–253]

							三絕句	(sān jué jù)
palace	front	soldier	horse	although	valiant	heroic	殿前兵馬雖驍雄	(diàn qián bīng mǎ suī xiāo xióng)
unrestrained	cruel	approximately	with	Qiang	Hun	same	縱暴略與羌渾同	(zòng bào lüè yǔ qiāng hùn tóng)
hear	say	kill	person	Han	river	on	聞道殺人漢水上	(wén dào shā rén hàn shuǐ shàng)
wives	girls	many	at	official	army	within	婦女多在官軍中	(fù nǚ duō zài guān jūn zhōng)

[Tonal pattern 11a (imperfect), see p. 171]

In about 759, an ailing Du Fu moved his family to Shu (Sichuan); he remained in the south for the rest of his life. In the spring of 765, Shu was thrown into chaos by the fighting of military factions. In the autumn of the same year, the Gansu Corridor in the northwest was repeatedly wracked by invasions of Tangut, Tuyuhun, Tibetan, and Uighur forces, some of whom reached as far as the area of the Chinese capital. Countless refugees fled south to safety. However, at the Han River, an army of the Imperial Guard set upon them, extorting money, raping, and killing. Du Fu wrote this poem to express his outrage. He is deliberately unpoetic here (if we consider frontier poetry like that by Wang Changling to be the norm for military topics); his point is to shock and shame his countrymen.

A greater influence on *qijue* development came from the regulated verse of Du Fu's late period, particularly his *qilü* ([chap. 9](#)). To express the complexities of a lifetime of hard experience, Du Fu abandoned the unity of scene that characterizes most High Tang poetry and, through the use of dense symbolism and rich cultural allusions, created sudden shifts of point of view that obliterate barriers of time and space, and distinctions between self and world. Late Tang *qijue* often present a shortened version of Du Fu's "shifting style": the first couplet describes an experience in the present that serves as a catalyst for mental projection in the second couplet. Thus later *qijue* poets often juxtaposed different realms of existence: past glory with present ruin, consciousness of age

with memory of youth, mundane reality with supramundane legend or imagination.

A fine example is “Red Cliff,” by Du Mu (803–852). Du Mu had a moderately successful bureaucratic career in the polarized political climate of the period, but the image presented in his *qijue* (and affirmed in popular anecdotes about him) is that of a playboy. Even a weighty historical subject like that of “Red Cliff” becomes, in Du Mu’s hands, a romantic daydream:

## C10.15 Red Cliff

Buried in sand a broken spear, its iron not yet gone  
I take up and burnish it, and recall an ancient age  
If east wind had not aided young Master Zhou  
Still: spring would bind the Qiao girls deep in Bronze Bird Tower

[QTS 16:523.5980; QSTRJJ, 676–678]

							赤壁	(chì bǐ)
broken	spear	bury	sand	iron	not	destroy	折戟沉沙鐵未銷	(zhé jǐ chén shā tiě wèi xiāo)
self	take	rub	wash	recognize	former	dynasty	自將磨洗認前朝	(zì jiāng mó xǐ rèn qián cháo)
east	wind	not	give	Zhou	man	advantage	東風不與周郎便	(dōng fēng bù yǔ zhōu láng biàn)
bronze	small bird	spring	deep	lock	two	Qiao	銅雀春深鎖二喬	(tóng què chūn shēn suǒ èr qiáo)

[Tonal pattern 11a, see p. 171]

The final years of the Han dynasty coincided with a great power struggle for dominance. Eventually only three great warlords were left: **Cao Cao** (155–220) of Wei to the north, Sun Quan of Wu to the southeast, and Liu Bei of Shu Han to the southwest. When Cao Cao invaded the south, Wu and Shu Han allied to fight him. The site of the climactic battle in 208 between the two forces was at Red Cliff, on the Yangtze River in modern Puqi, Hubei Province. Confident of victory, Cao Cao had chained his troopships together, bow to stern, and sailed east downriver to meet his foes. Making use of a fortunate change in the direction of the wind, the general of the allied forces, Zhou Yu, dispatched a wave of fireships and succeeded in annihilating the enemy fleet. Thus the fate of the empire depended on a turn of the wind. Du Mu’s focus is, however, not the battle

but the two daughters of the Han official Qiao Xuan, who were acknowledged as great beauties of the empire. The elder had been the wife of Sun Ce, Sun Quan's deceased elder brother, and the younger was the wife of Zhou Yu. One of the goals of Cao Cao's invasion was, reputedly, to claim the Qiao sisters for himself; he planned to remove them to Bronze Bird Tower, his pleasure palace at a site in modern Linzhang, Hebei Province. Cao Cao had also ordered that, after his death, all his palace ladies and dancing girls were to reside there and maintain sacrifices to his memory. What a pity, Du Mu suggests, if Cao Cao had succeeded and the Qiao girls had been taken from the world!

In "Dispelling Sorrow," an older and wiser Du Mu looks back on his life of pleasure and does not like what he sees:

### C10.16

#### Dispelling Sorrow

I sunk my soul in the river lands, wandered with wine,  
 Broke the hearts of Chu girls dancing lightly in my hands  
 Ten years on, I wake from a Yangzhou dream—  
 All I've won: a callous name in the green mansions

[QTS 16:524.5998; QSTRJJ, 684–685]

								遺懷	(qiǎn huái)
sink	soul	river	south	carry	wine	travel		落魄江南載酒行	(luò pò jiāng nán zài jiǔ xíng)
Chu	waist	intestine	break	hand/palm	within	light		楚腰腸斷掌中輕	(chǔ yāo cháng duàn zhǎng zhōng qīng)
ten	year	one	wake	Yang	-zhou	dream		十年一覺揚州夢	(shí nián yì jué yáng zhōu mèng)
win	obtain	green/blue	tower	heartless	—	name		贏得青樓薄倖名	(yíng dé qīng lóu bó xìng míng)

[Tonal pattern IIa, see p. 171]

"Dancing lightly in my hands" (*zhangzhong qing*) is a glancing allusion to the great Han beauty Zhao Feiyan, who, it was said, was so light that she could dance on the emperor's palm. "Green mansions" is a euphemism for the dwellings of the courtesans.

**Li Shangyin** (813–858) deserves his reputation as one of China's most obscure poets; some critics have explained certain poems as autobiographical works about clandestine love affairs with palace ladies and Daoist priestesses, while others see the same poems as simple expressions of personal sadness, or even as satirical political allegories.

## C10.17 Chang'e

Behind the mica screen, candles cast deep shadows  
 The Great River slowly sinks, and dawn stars are drowned  
 Chang-e must regret stealing the elixir—  
 Over blue sea, in dark sky, thinking night after night

[QTS 16:540.6197; QSTRJJ, 755–757]

							嫦娥	(cháng é)
cloud	mother	screen	—	candle	reflection	deep	雲母屏風燭影深	(yún mǔ píng fēng zhú yǐng shēn)
long	river	gradually	fall	dawn	star	submerge	長河漸落曉星沉	(cháng hé jiàn luò xiǎo xīng chén)
Chang	-e	should	regret	steal	divine	herb/medicine	嫦娥應悔偷靈藥	(cháng é yīng huǐ tōu líng yào)
blue	ocean	dark	sky	night	night	heart/mind	碧海青天夜夜心	(bì hǎi qīng tiān yè yè xīn)

[Tonal pattern 11a, see p. 171]

Chang'e, the goddess of the moon, had been the wife of the legendary archer Yi. After he saved humankind by successfully shooting down nine of the ten suns that were burning up the earth, the Queen Mother of the West rewarded him with the elixir of immortality. Chang'e stole and consumed the elixir and became immortal. However, in doing so, she lost her corporeality and, to her surprise and horror, floated up to the moon, where she remains. Li Shangyin integrates the Chang'e legend into his own melancholy reflections. After sitting up through the night by candlelight, he watches the "Great River" (Milky Way) fade in the dawn light. His thoughts turn to Chang'e, up in the moon. Yet who or what is she to him? A former lover who is now unattainable? An unattainable ideal? Or does he see himself in Chang'e, a loner emotionally or spiritually cut off from others by circumstances? The first couplet may provide a hint: the candles reflected in the mica screen glitter like a thousand stars in his room, just as Chang'e is surrounded by stars in the sky.

## PROSODY OF JUEJU

By now readers are familiar with the prosodic rules of regulated verse, so

those of *jueju* should pose few difficulties. The prosody of *jueju* allows for some variation, but it is by and large standardized. Line length is fixed and regular, and, as in most other forms of *shi* poetry, lines are read with breaks or pauses in predictable places. As Zong-qi Cai writes in [chapter 5](#), the pentasyllabic line is made up of a disyllable and a trisyllable separated by a caesura and presents semantic rhythm in either of two patterns: 2 + (1 + 2) or 2 + (2 + 1). The extra two characters in the heptasyllabic line are added to the *beginning* of the pentasyllabic structure, thus giving 4 + 3, or, more specifically, (2 + 2) + (1 + 2) or (2 + 2) + (2 + 1).

Every two lines are a couplet, which is not only a formal unit but also a semantic/thematic unit. A rhyming word always falls at the end of each couplet. The basic rhyming scheme of *jueju* is xAxA, which presents the first half as one discrete unit, followed by the second half comprising a unit of identical meter, with the resonating punctuation of the rhyme at the very end. This scheme is typical for *wujue*, although it is found occasionally in *qijue* as well. All but two—“Spring Lament” and “Quiet Night Thoughts”—of the pentasyllabic quatrains discussed earlier follow the pattern xAxA. The AAxA rhyming scheme is typical for *qijue* but rare for *wujue*. Every one of the *qijue* examples follows the pattern AAxA, although due to pronunciation change (especially the loss of entering tones), the rhymes are not always evident in modern Mandarin.

Tonal patterning provides a textured pattern of sound that both demarcates the individual couplets and unifies them in a balanced quatrain structure ([chap. 8](#)). In short, there are only four possible tonal patterns for regulated *jueju*: standard types I and II, and variant types Ia and IIa. As *wujue* seldom rhyme the first line, types I and II are dominant; since *qijue* usually rhyme the first line, types Ia and IIa are most common. Yet observance of tonal patterns is not quite as strict in *jueju* as in *lüshi*. “Violations” can be found in all positions (words) of a pentasyllabic or heptasyllabic line. Sometimes otherwise regulated poems break the *nian* rule, which ties couplets together. Tonal patterns of *jueju* examples that contain violations are marked in the preceding as “imperfect.” Presumably, prosody for *jueju* was more flexible due to the close connection that both *wujue* and *qijue* had with music.

Moreover, as mentioned, a subset of Tang *jueju* examples does not conform to normal tonal prosodic patterns and/or use oblique tone rhymes. Due no doubt to the influence of the Six Dynasties *yuefu* tradition, these *gujue* examples are overwhelmingly pentasyllabic. The

*qijue* was primarily a Tang invention, so it follows that heptasyllabic *gujue* are rare. The earlier examples without an identification of a tonal pattern are *gujue*, composed during the Six Dynasties or the Tang. Notably, these *gujue* works still often contain an element of prosodic design, although it is idiosyncratic. Wang Wei's "The Deer Fence," for example, uses oblique tone rhymes and displays clear tonal alternation in each line—but not between lines in each couplet. Distinguishing between a regulated *jueju* with an imperfect tonal pattern and a *gujue* with level-tone rhyme that displays some tonal design can at times be a matter of opinion (see, for example, Li Bai's "Amusing Myself").

## CLOSURE

Closure is considered by many what *jueju* do best. Various epithets used to describe *jueju*—"one note, three echoes" (*yichang santan*), "meaning beyond the words" (*yan wai zhi yi*), "flavor beyond flavor" (*weiwai zhi wei*), and "lines that end but meaning that does not end" (*ju jue yi bujue*)—all clearly refer to strong closure.

The closure functions akin to the way musical phrasing can create an emotional response. Let us first consider how semantic rhythm contributes to closure. While there are no strict rules for this aspect, frequently *jueju* poets present patterns of the final trisyllables in the four lines, which aid closure. For example, in "Quiet Night Thoughts," both lines in the first couplet end (2 + 1), while both lines in the second couplet end (1 + 2). Closure is particularly evident in "Lament of the Jade Stairs" and "Red Cliff." In both poems, the lines in the first couplet end (1 + 2). Line 3 changes to (2 + 1), while line 4 *returns* to (1 + 2) and the familiar pattern.

*Jueju* rhyming schemes, whether xAxA or AAxA, also help to create closure. In the former, rhyming characters are present at the end of each couplet, but the reader or listener *experiences* the rhyme only once—at the very end. The repetition of couplet structure and the rhyme integrate the two halves and complete a stable pattern, engendering a gratifying sense of closure. AAxA also leads to closure, but in a different way. The ringing of the rhyme in line 2 marks the first couplet as a seemingly finished unit. The poem in a sense starts again in line 3, and the reader or listener has a certain expectation that the second half will follow the pattern of the first. The omission of the rhyme in line 3 then presents a disquieting break in the sequence. However, the return to the familiar

rhyme in line 4 confirms the original pattern and unites the two couplets.

It is also revealing to consider the tonal patterns in terms of closure of both couplets and entire quatrains. Since the patterning is determined by the opposition of tones two syllables at a time, and because the lines have an odd number of characters, maximum contrast within the *single* line will always be imperfect. Only when *two* lines with exactly opposite tonal patterns are combined does the prosody balance perfectly. The reader or listener perceives the completion of the couplet structure, confirming expectations created by the ongoing sequence.

The tonal alternation of two couplets again emphasizes closure. Remember that the various line combinations result in only *two* standard couplets. In xAxA rhymed quatrains, one of each is required, yielding either standard type I or standard type II. Consider the resulting structures from the perspective of the reader or listener. The first couplet presents a unified and complete prosodic structure of maximum tonal contrast. Yet, rather than repeating the pattern, line 3 begins a *different* pattern; only when line 4 is finished does it become apparent that the second couplet *also* presents a structure of maximum tonal contrast. The two couplets affirm an identical structural principle but do so in different ways. The revelation of this dual quality of sameness within difference and difference within sameness creates closure. Put another way, it is *because* the pattern of the second couplet differs and yet follows the same principle that closure is ensured: if both couplets used the same pattern, the prosody would be merely repetitive, and no ending point would be implied.

When the rhyming scheme is AAxA, the prosody indicates closure in a somewhat different way. In the variant patterns types Ia and IIa, the first couplet does *not* present perfect maximum contrast but only generally does so. The only perfectly balanced unit is the second couplet, so it dominates, prosodically speaking. Yet it does not provide closure all on its own but also reintegrates the first couplet: notice that the pattern of line 4 is *identical* with that of line 1—the poem has returned to its starting point.

Apart from prosody, the organization of contents is invariably designed to lead to a sense of closure as well. The first couplet tends to be a setup for conclusion in the second couplet, and it is at first glance not necessarily memorable. Unlike in *lǜshi*, in *jueju* parallelism is not required, although it is an option. When found, it is more frequent in first couplets, where it efficiently presents multiple scene-setting images in a



few words. However, parallelism is generally avoided in second couplets, because its static quality makes conclusions difficult. The second couplet is the focus of the poem: it is successful when it completely integrates all four lines. Closure of a theme in *jueju* does not imply predictability. The first couplet sets up a theme or topic, perhaps by suggesting a question, a dramatic situation, or an archetypal character. The reader has an expectation of where the poem is going, but the successful *jueju* will “turn” (*zhuan*) the pattern in the second couplet and bring about a gratifying closure in a way that is surprising, transformative, yet still a natural outgrowth of what has been said before.<sup>24</sup>

The subtle design of Li Bai’s “Quiet Night Thoughts” has already been mentioned. Another illustrative example is Jin Changxu’s “Spring Lament.” The first couplet sets a conundrum: Why does the speaker so desperately want to stop the singing of the birds? The second couplet sends us in an unexpected direction but, at the same time, explains the mystery. The power of genre also helps to create thematic closure. As *jueju* became established, knowledgeable readers became accustomed to looking for closure in the second couplet, even when doing so was difficult. The “green moss” in Wang Wei’s “The Deer Fence” is an “image in suspension” that is at first glance enigmatic, but, because of its position in the poem, the reader *knows* it must be important and so actively tries to unify it with the rest of the poem.

Finally, a word about the differences between the two forms. Frequently, critics have assumed that the *qijue* is merely a longer version of the *wujue*. However, there are significant structural differences between the two that led to clear divergences in their aesthetic potentials and the styles that poets developed.

The pentasyllabic line invariably follows a 2 + 3 meter, which is most often used to present a single subject + predicate or topic + comment structure (thematic table of contents 5.2 and 5.3). The two parts of the line are read together as related units. Alternatively, both lines in a couplet may constitute one continuous proposition. It is *possible*, but very uncommon, for one pentasyllabic line to present two separate topic + comment structures. This is because the two-character part of the line is too short to say very much. The three-character part, however, shows considerably more potential to complete a topic + comment, with its 1 + 2 or 2 + 1 pattern variability. Thus when we consider the pentasyllabic quatrain, generally we see a maximum of four topic + comment structures, but more usually three (as second couplets tend to be

continuous propositions to create closure) or even two.

The heptasyllabic line, with its 4 + 3 meter, can and frequently does present two distinct topic + comment structures. (In fact, this is its birthright: the heptasyllabic line developed gradually out of the tetrasyllabic couplet during the Han and Six Dynasties periods.)<sup>25</sup> A heptasyllabic quatrain could thus theoretically comprise as many as *eight* topic + comment structures, although a number between four and six is the norm, as poets tended to employ a balance of imagistic language (that is, undergrammaticalized content words) and continuous propositions. Although the *qijue* form is only eight characters longer than the *wujue*, it contains far more space for development; moreover, since the overtones in a poem are often suggested through implicit comparisons between the parts, the more parts there are, the more potential there is for complexity.

The rhythm of the heptasyllabic line also differs from that of the pentasyllabic line, which has implications for how poets approached it. When pentasyllabic poetry is chanted, it rather naturally falls into eight beats per line: *tum tum, tum tum tum (rest, rest, rest) / tum tum, tum tum tum (rest, rest, rest)*. The length of the silent rests gives the overall rhythm a slow and stately quality, which implicitly suggests that the content is weighty and important. When heptasyllabic poetry is chanted, it *also* naturally falls into eight beats per line: *tum tum tum tum, tum tum tum (rest) / tum tum tum tum, tum tum tum (rest)*. The four-beat unit at the beginning of the line creates more momentum than does the two-beat unit at the beginning of the pentasyllabic line; moreover, the single beat of rest at the end of the heptasyllable gives the impression that each line rushes into the next. Thus heptasyllabic poetry has a distinctive flow, continuity, and lightness. The best poets of *qijue* carefully crafted the sound quality of the syllable combinations, employing alliterations, internal rhymes, and reduplication more frequently than in the pentasyllabic line. Hu Yinglin observed: “Pentasyllabic *jueju* emphasize the real and tangible; usually the substance exceeds literariness. Heptasyllabic *jueju* emphasize the lofty and beautiful; usually literariness exceeds substance.”<sup>26</sup>

The differences between *wujue* and *qijue* had a clear impact on poetic practice. After the Tang, *wujue* became increasingly rare; we can conclude that poets no longer saw creative potential in the form—the great Tang writers had exhausted it. *Qijue*, on the contrary, remained one of the most popular and expressive poetic forms throughout the classical

period.

Charles Egan

#### NOTES

1. Wang Kaisu (Qing dynasty), *Saotan balüe* (*Eight Sketches of the Literary World*), quoted in *Qianshou Tangren jueju* (*One Thousand Jueju Poems by Tang Writers*), ed. Fu Shousun and Liu Baishan (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1985), 1020.

2. Gao Buying, ed., *Tang Song shi juyao* (*The Essential Shi Poems of the Tang and Song*) (Hong Kong: Zhonghua, 1985), 750.

3. Charles Egan, "A Critical Study of the Origins of *Chüeh-chü* Poetry," *Asia Major*, 3rd ser., 6, pt. 1 (1993): 83–125.

4. Stephen C. Levinson, *Pragmatics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

5. F. R. Palmer, *Mood and Modality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

6. Shuen-fu Lin, "The Nature of the Quatrain from the Late Han to the High T'ang," in *The Vitality of the Lyric Voice: Shih Poetry from the Late Han to the T'ang*, ed. Shuen-fu Lin and Stephen Owen (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986), 306–308. Lin proposes three major *jueju* characteristics derived from Six Dynasties songs: simple diction, dynamic syntactic continuity, and sententiousness (296–331).

7. The term is from Zhong Rong, *Shi pin* (*An Evaluation of Poetry*). See Kang-i Sun Chang, "Description of Landscape in Early Six Dynasties Poetry," in Lin and Owen, *Vitality of the Lyric Voice*, 105–129.

8. Daniel Hsieh, *The Evolution of Jueju Verse* (New York: Lang, 1996), 206–216.

9. Wang Li, *Hanyu shilü xue* (*Studies in Chinese Verse Regulation*) (Shanghai: Jiaoyu, 1963), especially 33–41.

10. Shen Deqian, *Tangshi biecaiji* (*A New Selection of Tang Poetry*), quoted in Fu and Liu, *Qianshou Tangren jueju*, 220.

11. The second couplet is technically parallel as well, but the conditional proposition gives it continuous syntax; this type of parallelism is called *liushui dui* (running-water parallelism).

12. Peter N. Gregory, "Sudden Enlightenment Followed by Gradual Cultivation: Tsung-mi's Analysis of Mind," in *Sudden and Gradual: Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought*, ed. Peter N. Gregory (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1987), 279–320, especially 281–284.

13. J. D. Frodsham, *The Murmuring Stream: The Life and Works of the Chinese Nature Poet Hsieh Ling-yün (385–433)*, *Duke of K'ang-Lo* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1967), 1:90. For the development of landscape verse, see 86–105.

14. Eliot Weinberger, *Nineteen Ways of Looking at Wang Wei: How a Chinese Poem Is Translated* (Mount Kisco, N.Y.: Moyer Bell, 1987).

15. Edward Conze, *Buddhist Thought in India: Three Phases of Buddhist Philosophy* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1962), 60–61.

16. Paul Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations* (London: Routledge, 1989), 2.

17. The second character here is read *ying*, not *jing* (scene).

18. Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, 96–115.

19. Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, 112.

20. Conze, *Buddhist Thought in India*, 229.

21. Quoted in Neal Donner, "Sudden and Gradual Intimately Conjoined: Chih-I's T'ien-t'ai View," in Gregory, *Sudden and Gradual*, 201–226, especially 212–213.

22. Lu Qinli, comp., *Xian Qin Han Wei Jin Nanbei chao shi* (*Poetry of the Qin, Han, Wei, Jin, and Northern and Southern Dynasties*) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 1:116–117. A rhyme-prose (*fu*) composition in the *Han shu* (*History of the Han Dynasty*) is also attributed to Ban Jieyu.

23. Gao, *Tang Song shi juyao*, 750.

24. In chapter 8, Zong-qi Cai describes the functional hierarchy of the four couplets using the traditional critical terms *qi* (introduction), *cheng* (elaboration), *zhuan* (transition), and *he* (conclusion). Traditional critics also frequently applied this quadripartite pattern to *jueju*, with the difference that each part was assigned to an individual line. However, difficulties arise when attempting to interpret *jueju* in this way, as it requires that the two lines in a couplet fulfill different functions, which is counter to usual poetic practice. If we instead employ a simpler bipartite pattern, then the terms remain useful. Thus the first couplet of a *jueju* is for introduction/elaboration, and the second is for transition/conclusion.

25. Luo Genze, "Qiyanshi zhi qiyuan ji qi chengshu" (The Origin and Maturation of Heptasyllabic Poetry), in *Luo Genze gudian wenxue lunwen ji* (Collection of Discourses on Classical Literature by Luo Genze) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1985), 167–209.

26. Hu Yinglin, *Shi sou*, quoted in Fu and Liu, *Qianshou Tangren jueju*, 1020.

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Shen Zufen 沈祖棻. *Tangren qijueshi qianshi* 唐人七絕詩淺釋 (*Qijue Poems by Tang Poets, with Annotation and Commentary*). Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1981.

Sun Kaidi 孫楷第. "Jueju shi zenmeyang qilaide" 絕句是怎麼樣起來的 (How Did *Jueju* Develop?). *Xueyuan* 學苑 1, no. 4 (1947): 83–88.

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## Ancient-Style *Shi* Poetry

### Continuation and Changes

Mention Tang dynasty ***guti shi*** (ancient-style poetry), and you will quickly hear about what it is not. That is, it is not ***jinti shi*** (recent-style poetry); in fact, the genre as such came into being only alongside the development of the “recent,” or “regulated,” style. When writing an ancient-style poem, poets (especially in the genre’s early days) meticulously avoided the use of any devices—tonal regulation, prescribed rhyme patterns, central parallel couplets, and the eight-line poem length—that might belie the influence of what they saw as the superficial and ornamental aesthetic that had begun animating the poetic world two centuries earlier. But, despite the avowed hopes of some of its earliest composers, ancient-style poems are not simply continuations of the poetry of long ago. Unlike the general term “ancient poetry,” or *gushi*, which makes explicit the historical divide stretching between the new reader and the old work, the term *guti shi* expresses the desire to bridge (or, in some cases, to close) that divide—to write a poem today as though it were written yesterday.

It is now somewhat difficult to imagine that the great poets of the Tang could be nostalgic for the literary writings of times past. Yet, for many of the poets working in this style, the eschewal of the trappings of regulation—whether in individual poems or in their oeuvre as a whole—reflected their adherence to a particular poetic ethos that they deemed to be on the decline: one that valued authentic expression over performance, directness over elusiveness, and substance over design. Perhaps no one has described this aesthetic more succinctly and evocatively than the poet Chen Zi’ang (661–702) when he compared certain admired poems written in this style to the “music of metal and stone.”

Poets writing in the ancient style were, in essence, searching for a “purer” mode of expression, one untainted by ornamental flourishes. The poetry they eventually developed shares certain general characteristics: a vigorous, free-flowing rhythm; direct language; and flexibility in prosodic design and use of poetic devices. As we shall see in the following poems, however, the details of poetic “ancientness,” in practice, varied greatly among individual poets and evolved over time. Some, like Chen Zi’ang, chose a lapidary, prosaic style—one that truly rings with the stark, primordial resonance of metal and stone—often relying on allusion and Daoist terminology to convey his lofty yet passionate concerns about corruption and man’s blindness to the reality of the Dao. On the opposite end of the spectrum, and writing during the period when the regulated style was at its apogee, **Li Bai** (701–762) reveled in the apparent freedom from rules, showcasing a voice that ranged widely from subtle musicality to outrageous exclamation; for him, true ancientness could best be attained by making frank use of poetic conventions rather than pretending that they were in any way natural. A bit later, **Bai Juyi** (772–846), interested in founding a poetics that really could transform society, seems to have borrowed a bit of both: in keeping with Chen Zi’ang’s spirit, he espoused language that spurred later readers to note (sometimes disparagingly) his poetry’s similarity to prose; at the same time, like Li Bai, he made poetic genres and conventions work for him in unexpected ways.

In these examples, the artful authenticity that is the hallmark of the *guti shi* provides a unique window onto the strivings of poets as they sought to blend the necessity of design with the ideal of pure, unmediated expression; ancient values with subjective experience; and the philosophical with the personal.



The first example is a poem written by Chen Zi’ang, author of a group of thirty-eight poems now collectively known as “Ganyu,” most often understood as “Moved by Things Encountered.” Chen Zi’ang is best known—because of both these poems and statements made in his preface to a poem called “Xiuzhu pian” (Tapering Bamboo)—as a prime initiator of an amorphous poetic reform movement that would eventually be known as *fugu* (return to the ancients), protesting the ornamentation of the recent poetry of the Qi and Liang dynasties. His life as an active and outspoken member of the court of Empress Wu Zetian (r. 690–705)

is marked by the highs and lows, the periods of exile and return, that constituted the making of a righteous official of the day; this experience helped secure the ideological legitimacy of his oeuvre and its reformist stance. Guided in his actions and in his writings by a blend of Confucian ethics and Daoist and Buddhist spirituality, he experienced the wanderings of the knight-errant, the trials of the soldier on the frontier, the reclusion of the Daoist adept, and, in the end, the death in prison of the political idealist at the all-too-young age of forty-one.<sup>1</sup>

Since as early as the ninth century, there have been many interpretations of the title of these poems, “Ganyu,” with the most common being “Moved by Events I Encounter.”<sup>2</sup> All interpretations convey that, in contrast to the perceived artificiality of recent-style poetry, these poems are to be read as the “natural” product of spontaneous feelings.

## C11.1

### Moved by Events I Encounter, No. 6

	I behold the transformations of the dragon —	感遇	(gǎn yù)
2	Now, the Yang essence is at its fullest.	吾觀龍變化	(wú guān lóng biàn huà)
	How dark and dense the stone forests —	乃是至陽精	(nǎi shì zhì yáng jīng)
4	Nothing in the shadowy caves can hinder its course.	石林何冥密	(shí lín hé míng mì)
	The ancients who attained the way of the Transcendents —	幽洞無留行	(yōu dòng wú liú xíng)
6	Indeed were the equals of Primordial Transformation.	古之得仙道	(gǔ zhī dé xiān dào)
	Awareness of the Obscure is not the same as muddled	信與元化並	(xìn yǔ yuán huà bìng)
	knowledge — <sup>3</sup>		
8	Who can fathom the deepest dark?	玄感非蒙識	(xuán gǎn fēi méng shí)
	Worldly people are bound by what their eyes see,	誰能測淪冥	(shéi néng cè lún míng)
10	Heady with drink they laugh at alchemy handbooks.	世人拘目見	(shì rén jū mù jiàn)
	On Kunlun Mountain there is a jasper tree,	酣酒笑丹經	(hān jiǔ xiào dān jīng)
12	How can they hope to pluck its blossoms?	崑崙有瑤樹	(kūn lún yǒu yáo shù)
		安得采其英	(ān dé cǎi qí yīng)

[QTS 2:83.888]

Shot through with the mystical language of the Daoist adept—indeed, reminiscent of the *xuanyan shi* (abstruse poetry) of the Eastern Jin (317–420)—this poem may not seem (at least to readers today) a prime example of personal, lyric expression. But it is precisely Chen Zi’ang’s willingness to refer directly to the unfathomable spiritual realm of dragons and the “Obscure” that marks this poem as going against the grain, as



the poet's personal expression of his need to look beyond the surface colors and textures celebrated in the court poetics of the times. Chen Zi'ang—insistently speaking in his own voice (*wu guan* [*I behold*])—expresses the anguish of a clear-sighted yet powerless man positioned between the revered ancients, who have attained transcendence and stand side by side with Creation itself, and the foolish men of his day, who content themselves with the intoxicating pleasures of life and mock those who would move beyond.

In this, the sixth poem of the series entitled “Ganyu,” then, Chen Zi'ang draws a clear distinction between those who have apprehended the sense of the “Obscure” (line 7) and those who have not. It is thus fitting that the poem is built on the contrast between two types of perception: *guan* (to behold or observe [line 1]) and *jian* (to see [line 9]). In a general sense, he who *beholds* actively applies his attention to an object or a scene, observing its appearance in order to understand, to “fathom” (*ce* [line 8]), the essence beneath the surface. But what does *guan* mean when applied to a world that is not visible in the strict sense of the word, as we find here—a world of dragon transformations and impenetrable darkness? Clearly, the vision to which it refers does not depend on the eyes alone. The closest term in English might then be “to visualize,” reminiscent of the visualization practiced by Buddhists in their meditations before images of Buddhist deities. Visualization involves not just looking at, but also taking in the sculpted or painted image of the deity, such that the viewer ultimately perceives the Buddha essence within.

In line 1 of this poem, when Chen Zi'ang declares that he is beholding the “transformations of the dragon,” he alludes to the first hexagram of the *Yijing* (*Book of Changes*), *qian*, or the “creative”: the hexagram in which all six lines are yang (hence the expression “the essence of yang at its fullest”).<sup>4</sup> This hexagram indicates situations in which the dragon is hidden, suggesting that the superior man, although present, is still not manifest in the world; one can but watch and wait. As he beholds the dark forests before him, sensing—or visualizing—the presence of the dragon, he does not need, as he might in a recent-style poem, to specify what scene in the world is inspiring this vision. It is visible everywhere to any discerning person who can apply his vision in this way. This mode of seeing realizes the interdependence between the perspicacious seer and the hidden object, and so enacts—if in a limited way—the ideal dissolution of the boundary between self and world.



The contrast between the two types of vision, *guan* and *jian*, is echoed throughout the poem in a series of antitheses, all of which resonate with related spiritual and moral connotations: between unimpeded “movement” (*xing* [line 4])<sup>5</sup> and “boundedness” (*ju* [line 9]); between the “ancients” (*gu* [line 5]) and “worldly people” (*shi ren* [line 9]); between the alchemical substances (*dan*) described in mystical texts and mere wine (*jiu* [line 10]); and between “fathoming” (*ce* [line 8]) and “laughing” (*xiao* [line 10]). This web of contrasts, the elements of which all point to the rift between the enlightened ancients and the muddled people of his own time, are never presented in parallel couplets, as they might have been in regulated verse. Rather, these contrasts are dispersed throughout the poem, coming together only in lines 9 and 10, near the end.

The effect is one of flow rather than symmetry, open-endedness rather than containment, qualities that are typically associated with the ancient style. This particular form is also wonderfully appropriate for the object being described, recalling as it does the movement and transformations of the dragon and, even more significantly, the element of change that is at the heart of the hexagrams and the world they are thought to embody. And the form has one other especially apposite effect; apprehension of this pattern in the poem demands of the reader the same discernment as that displayed by the poet when he beholds the ever-changing, now-hidden dragon in the world before his eyes. Chen Zi’ang’s message, then, is clear: to grasp the “Obscure,” the pattern and movement of the Dao, we cannot rely on the images that appear before our fleshly eyes. If one is to ascend to the heights of Kunlun, the mountain of the immortals, and there pluck the blossoms of the “jasper tree” of longevity, one cannot afford to mock the knowledge contained in the alchemical guidebooks.

This poem’s theme is perfectly suited to the ancient style, a style that favors discursive language and downplays perception as a mode of understanding. In keeping with his strong preference for direct assertions, Chen Zi’ang couches his observations in a language of plainspoken elegance, which complements the abstruseness of his imagery. The syntax is straightforward throughout, and the use of intensifiers such as *naishi* (line 2) and *xin* (line 6), along with the rhetorical questions posed in lines 8 and 12, draw attention to the poet’s presence both as a witness to this invisible scene and as a speaker to his readers. His “I” is there, in the first line, beseeching us to share in his vision, speaking to us in five-character lines that, while classic and balanced (commanding the authority of early *shi* poetry), are enlivened by enjambment and lack of

symmetry.

As for his use of tones, Chen Zi'ang not only avoids any semblance of tonal regulation in this couplet but also thwarts the normative preference for contrasting tones, choosing the third and fourth characters of both lines from the rising-tone category. This choice, imposed on what practitioners of regulated poetry viewed as the key positions of five-character verses, is powerful; and it is rendered all the more so by the fact that line 3 is composed of four rising tones in a row. This slows the reader down, as rising tones are musically interpreted as longer than falling ones. The overall effect is one of spontaneity and idiosyncrasy, an effect that helps convey the poet's sense of solitude in a world in decline.

Like **Qu Yuan** (340?–278 B.C.E.), and like Chen Zi'ang's more direct model, **Ruan Ji** (210–263), Chen Zi'ang's sense of solitude was endemic. It may not be too simplistic to attribute his rebellious stance to his exile and to the many disappointments he encountered in pursuing his lifelong goal to serve the court. But his loneliness was far-reaching indeed, encompassing his sense of his place in time as well as in space. Chen Zi'ang was a man who felt himself to be of the ancients, but not among them. Perhaps nowhere did he express this with more vigor and directness than in the justifiably famous quatrain “A Song on Ascending Youzhou Terrace”:

## C11.2

### A Song on Ascending Youzhou Terrace

I do not see the ancients before me,  
Behind, I do not see those yet to come.  
I think of the mournful breadth of  
    heaven and earth,<sup>6</sup>  
Alone, grieving—tears fall.

登幽州臺歌

前不見古人

後不見來者

念天地之悠悠

獨愴然而涕下

(*dēng yōu zhōu tái gē*)

(*qián bú jiàn gǔ rén*)

(*hòu bú jiàn lái zhě*)

(*niàn tiān dì zhī yōu yōu*)

(*dú chuāng rán ér tì xià*)

[QTS 2:83.899]

This poem leaves no doubt about the kind of language that Chen Zi'ang associates with the value of ancient authenticity. Plain and pellucid, it appears to adhere to no poetic rule but that dictating the spontaneous, untrammelled expression of spontaneous, untrammelled feeling. This is not to say that it lacks pattern or poetry. Chen Zi'ang takes

full advantage of the ancient style in three important areas: (1) simple syntactic parallelism in the opening couplet, (2) varied line length (including the presence of two six-character lines), and (3) falling tone in the end rhymes (which contributes to the feeling of an uncompromising, “metal-and-stone” musicality). Combined, these three features frame his simple language in the prosody of ancient poetry.

The presentation of emotion, too, is handled with the ancient aesthetic in mind. Until the last line, feelings are conveyed only indirectly, through the evocation of his absolute solitude. But the effectiveness of this short piece derives primarily from its ability to make the invisible visible—much as we saw in “Moved by Events I Encounter, No. 6.” Once again, seeing, which is given such prominence in the first couplet, reveals itself as an impotent act, because what he is seeking is not visible to the eye. This “blindness” is especially powerful when we consider the title, “Ascending Youzhou Terrace,” which places this poem within a thematic category that usually develops the lyric from an initial viewing of a landscape.<sup>7</sup>

Line 3 plays on these thwarted visual expectations. The “heaven and earth” named here are, at least in part, spatial entities that one can behold from a point on high. The spatial aspect of *youyou*, a reduplicative descriptive that connotes both a great expanse and a deep, ineffable sadness, can also be *seen*. But whatever visible attributes this scene might have, they are negated by the realization that, for the particular eyes beholding it here, the essence of this “mournful breadth” lies in its emptiness. The heaven-and-earth that stretches out before him is bare of companions and, for that matter, of anything one can truly behold. And the poet has, in fact, indicated as much in the very first word of this line. He does not gaze at the terrain or even behold it. Rather, this vast expanse is something that exists in his inner world; it is something he is reminded of or “thinks of” (*nian*), something he knows and can contemplate.

As in the previous poem, Chen Zi’ang uses vision to negate the importance of mere sight. Having sketched out this portrait of his all-encompassing solitude, and erased the boundary between the seer and the seen, he allows himself, in the last line, to notice and record his own emotions, in the same unadorned language that he has been using throughout. He plainly names his feeling of grief (*chuangran*) and notes that his “tears fall.” This closing image of falling tears is already well worn by his time, and it is hard to tell whether its poignancy in this context results from—or despite—its nostalgic familiarity. The abrupt shift from

unnameable immensity to unnameable intimacy, not unusual in Chinese poetic practice, still seems to bestow a certain power on this age-old gesture, placing both unnameables on an equal footing within the scheme of things to be beheld but not seen.

Another poet whose name is associated with ancient-style poetry is Li Bai, often referred to as the “banished immortal.” Traditionally paired with Du Fu as one of China’s two greatest poets, his outsize legend has long since overshadowed his biography as a context for understanding his contribution to Chinese poetry. Unlike Chen Zi’ang, who arrived at court by way of the official path of the examination system, Li Bai acquired his post in the Hanlin Academy thanks to the favor of the prominent minister He Zhizhang (659–744), a poet in his own right who was impressed by the verve and originality of Li Bai’s poetry. As legend has it, Li Bai soon lost his position, not because of his outspoken political ideas but because of what might be called bad behavior; amusing anecdotal tales of his arrogance abound. He spent much of his life on the road, now as a supporter of one of the revolts associated with the **An Lushan Rebellion** (755–763), now as a Daoist adept living in seclusion. Although his fame as a poet was already secured during his lifetime, his penchant for fantasy and playing with the rules ensured that the question of his merit would be raised by critics throughout the ensuing centuries.

Writing at the apex of the period known as the High Tang, Li Bai, like Chen Zi’ang, strove to write in a language of ancient authenticity, although his version of ancientness stands at the far end of the spectrum in relation to Chen Zi’ang. In the opinion of many traditional critics, who placed him on a par with Du Fu, he succeeded. Others, however, found his writing ostentatious, undisciplined, and altogether too full of fantastic imagery to be considered authentic at all, let alone ancient. Although he wrote many poems in the regulated style, a common refrain among critics is that his nature was too unrestrained and unfettered to conform to the strict requirements of regulated verse. In a word, he is not usually one to depict himself weeping; but, as declared by one of his contemporaries, his poetry could “make the spirits weep and the ghosts shed tears.” “A Lu Mountain Tune: Sent to Minister Lu Xuzhou,” inspired by a site that has always carried the traces of the spirits, is precisely the type of poem that earned him his reputation. It richly rewards the reader who is willing to penetrate past its dazzling surface and attend to its subtler details.

**A Lu Mountain Tune: Sent to Minister Lu Xuzhou**

廬山謠寄盧侍御虛舟

- It is I, the original madman of Chu,  
 2 Singing "The Phoenix," laughing at Confucius.  
 One hand gripping the green jade staff,  
 4 I depart Yellow Crane Pavilion at dawn.  
 Seeking transcendents among the Five  
 Mountains, I am not daunted by distance,<sup>8</sup>  
 6 All my life I've loved to wander in famous  
 mountains.  
 Lu Mountain blossoms beside the Southern  
 Dipper,  
 8 The Nine Folds of Windscreen Mountain —  
 a bolt of cloud embroidery,  
 And shadows fall on the shining lake in inky-  
 green light.  
 10 Golden Portico opens ahead — two peaks  
 stretching long,  
 Silver River hangs upside down from Three-  
 Stone Bridge.<sup>9</sup>  
 12 Gazing in the distance — Incense Burner  
 Waterfall,<sup>10</sup>  
 Far-off cliffs and layered palisades rising up  
 into the blue.  
 14 Iridescent green shadows, red dawn clouds,  
 reflecting morning sun,  
 Even birds cannot fly the length of the sky of  
 Wu.  
 16 I climb on high, behold the stirring sights  
 between heaven and earth,

- (*lú shān yáo jì lú shì yù xū zhōu*)  
 我本楚狂人 (*wǒ běn chǔ kuáng rén*)  
 鳳歌笑孔丘 (*fèng gē xiào kǒng qiū*)  
 手持綠玉杖 (*shǒu chí lǜ yù zhàng*)  
 朝別黃鶴樓 (*zhāo bié huáng hè lóu*)  
 五嶽尋仙不辭遠 (*wǔ yuè xún xiān bù cí yuǎn*)  
 一生好入名山遊 (*yì shēng hào rù míng shān yóu*)  
 廬山秀出南斗傍 (*lú shān xiù chū nán dòu páng*)  
 屏風九疊雲錦張 (*píng fēng jiǔ dié yún jǐn zhāng*)  
 影落明湖青黛光 (*yǐng luò míng hú qīng dài guāng*)  
 金闕前開二峰長 (*jīn quē qián kāi èr fēng cháng*)  
 銀河倒挂三石梁 (*yín hé dào guà sān shí liáng*)  
 香爐瀑布遙相望 (*xiāng lú pù bù yáo xiāng wàng*)  
 迴崖沓嶂凌蒼蒼 (*jiǒng yá tà zhāng líng cāng cāng*)  
 翠影紅霞映朝日 (*cui yǐng hóng xiá yìng zhāo rì*)  
 鳥飛不到吳天長 (*niǎo fēi bú dào wú tiān cháng*)  
 登高壯觀天地間 (*dēng gāo zhuàng guān tiān dì jiān*)

	The great river boundless flows on, never to return.	大江茫茫去不還 (dà jiāng máng máng qù bù huán)
18	Yellow clouds for ten thousand miles, stirring the color of wind, White waves along the Nine Rivers, flowing snowcapped mountains.	黃雲萬里動風色 (huáng yún wàn lǐ dòng fēng sè)
20	I love singing about Lu Mountain, My inspiration stirs because of Lu Mountain.	白波九道流雪山 (bái bō jiǔ dào liú xuě shān) 好為廬山謠 (hào wéi lú shān yáo)
22	I lazily peer at Stone Mirror, it cleanses my heart, The place where Master Xie used to walk is now submerged in moss. <sup>11</sup>	興因廬山發 (xīng yīn lú shān fā) 閑窺石鏡清我心 (xián kuī shí jìng qīng wǒ xīn)
24	In the morning I take “reverted cinnabar”: no more worldly cares, <sup>12</sup> My “lute-heart plays all three chords”: the Dao just now complete. <sup>13</sup>	謝公行處蒼苔沒 (xiè gōng xíng chù cāng tái mò) 早服還丹無世情 (zǎo fú huán dān wú shì qíng)
26	Far off I glimpse transcendents among the colored clouds, Holding a lotus blossom, I will pay court at the Jade Capital.	琴心三疊道初成 (qín xīn sān dié dào chū chéng)
28	But first, a rendezvous with Han Man above the Nine Regions— I would like to meet Lu Ao and roam the Great Purity. <sup>14</sup>	遙見仙人彩雲裡 (yáo jiàn xiān rén cǎi yún lǐ) 手把芙蓉朝玉京 (shǒu bǎ fú róng cháo yù jīng)
		先期汗漫九垓上 (xiān qī hàn màn jiǔ gāi shàng) 願接盧敖遊太清 (yuàn jiē lú áo yóu tài qīng)

[LBJJZ 1:863–867]

There is, from the outset, something outrageous about this poem. With its wild, unpredictable blend of role-playing, celestial voyage, vivid nature imagery, Daoist fantasy, and direct speech, it mocks the very idea of form and genre; “Lu Mountain Tune,” like the mountain that inspired it,<sup>15</sup> seems to hail from a time beyond the strictures and periodization of literary history and defies the distinctions commonly drawn among the Buddhist, Daoist, and Confucian traditions. Elements of **yuefu**, recent-style regulated poems, **fu** (rhapsody), and **sao** all make their appearance here, and it would be easy to simply echo what so many critics have said: that Li Bai is too spontaneous and natural (or, too coarse and undisciplined, depending on their particular viewpoint) to adhere to the rules and regulations of accepted poetic practice. But to take the easy way would be to deprive ourselves of the ability to appreciate the particular way in which Li Bai pursued that ancient authenticity that was also the goal of Chen Zi’ang. More fruitful would be to notice how the idea of alchemical metamorphosis, explicitly alluded to toward the end of the poem (lines 24–25), provides the aesthetic and structural foundation

of the whole.

To begin, who is the “madman of Chu,” and what does Li Bai mean by opening his poem by claiming to be—or to have been—him? As recorded in both the *Analects* (18.5) and the ***Zhuangzi***, one day the madman was passing by Confucius and began wildly singing what has come to be known as the “Phoenix Song”:

Phoenix, phoenix, how has virtue failed!  
The future you cannot wait for; the past you cannot pursue.  
When the world has the Way, the sage succeeds;  
When the world is without the Way, the sage survives...<sup>16</sup>

The madman’s act of mocking the Sage for his idealistic efforts to restore the Way in a declining age would have been well known to Li Bai’s readers. For those familiar with the poet’s occasional assertions of his position as the savior-poet, here to restore poetic writing to its long-lost golden days—not to mention his own ambitions to serve in the court—the irony of this declaration might be so strong as to inspire them to laugh out loud.

But it is unlikely that he was engaging in self-mockery in this poem, and, even if he were, the opening couplet offers much more; layers of meaning adhere to the first two characters, *wo ben* (literally, I-original). The mere presence of the pronoun “I” in the first position of line 1 of any poem, even of the ancient style, while not unheard of, is a bit startling. Had this been a *yuefu*, in which first-person speech uttered by a particular character is frequent, this would not necessarily be especially significant. Here, in a lyric poem, it makes a point of the poet’s spontaneity, his lack of inhibition in directly addressing his readers and confronting them with his existence, not as a cool, detached contemplator but as an actor in his (and our) own world. He proclaims himself an actor, not merely in the sense of an agent, an independent subject acting in the world. It seems that his freedom to act includes the possibility of assuming roles, of changing his costume before the eyes of his audience. What is interesting, though, is that he draws his readers’ attention not just to the legendary figure of the madman, but also to their shared acquaintance, as readers of history, with his story; the pleasure of partaking of shared allusions is part of the function of the second word, *ben*.

*Ben* means “at the root,” hence “originally” or “inherently.” But there are



at least three valid, if slightly overlapping, ways to read it in this context. First, the line might read as Li Bai's explanation of who he is at heart, as in "I *descend from* the madman of Chu." Second, with a slight shift of nuance, *ben* can suggest change from a former state: "I was, *originally*, the madman of Chu." And finally, a slightly different reading, in which *ben* connotes the essence of something and thus yields something like "I am, *at heart*, the madman of Chu!"

No single one of these is really adequate to the sense intended here, but a consideration of their conjoined range of meaning is. Together, these readings of *ben* suggest that we have just witnessed a revelation of the true, fundamental identity of the poet behind the mask. But, interestingly, and in his typically playful fashion, Li Bai executes this revelation not by removing a mask but by putting one on—as though the "I" that is Li Bai is somehow false, and the madman constitutes his true essence. The subtle ambiguity between the two interpretations conflates—or even confounds—the pedestrian distinctions between past and present, replacing those distinctions with the promise of mutability.

As it happens, this promise is fulfilled in the very next couplet. In lines 3 and 4, the poet transforms himself into the famous immortal Zi An, who left the tower on the back of a yellow crane, never to return. This mutation is amusing, but Li Bai has never been one to blend allusions lightly. Here, the madman and Zi An dovetail rather neatly: first, in their success in avoiding engagement in worldly affairs and, second, more subtly, in their respective associations with time's passage (with each contravening it in a different way).

The transformation of the madman into Zi An is formally rounded out and completed by Li Bai's use of a unified rhyme scheme, which aurally confirms the presence of a single, unified subject behind this series of actions. The momentum of this narrative then carries over into the next couplet, aided by the continuation of the same end rhyme. Here, the line length changes from five to seven characters, in an expansion that breathes life into the poet-immortal's ascent into the heavens. This change marks more than just a shift in the action; it seems to reflect yet another change in subject—or, to be more consistent, another transformation. Yes, the subject is still the "I" who put on the mask of the madman-turned-immortal (to reveal the true Li Bai), but now he appears to have assumed a third identity—which, at least for the moment, seems like it could be the real one. Suddenly, no longer an immortal himself, he is a seeker of the immortals among whom he loved to roam (inasmuch as



Chinese mountains are thought of as being the dwellings of the immortals), and seeker, most importantly, of the state of immortality.

Abruptly, in line 7, however present the poet has been up to this point—singing, teasing, flying—is as hidden as he is now. Still in the expansive seven-character mode, the poem's rhyme shifts, and the poet disappears behind views of his beloved mountains. They are set forth in successive, highly impressionistic vistas that say as much about his personal vision as they do about the peaks themselves. The reader is transported from mountain to mountain, not in a series of well-balanced couplets but in a unique triad (lines 7–9) of rhyming, seven-character lines. This rapid-fire succession rushes us forward breathlessly as we are presented not so much with objects as with perception itself—as experienced through the qualities of height, texture, and light. Such are the pure elements that mountains make visible to those with the wherewithal to “fly” there. This is no map of Lu Mountain; it is a map of the poet's traveling gaze, more reminiscent of the vibrant and fantastic *Chuci* (*Lyrics of Chu*) than of other Tang examples of landscape poetry. The primacy of perception over landscape emerges even more clearly in lines 10–13. These balanced couplets do little to dispel the sensation of a crush of images taken in by an unfettered, wandering eye, a sensation that is sustained by the continued concentration of the rhyme, repeated in every line.

This section of the poem closes with one last couplet, which, while maintaining the same rhyme pattern, seems less hurried, as its first line falls outside the rhyme category. The frenzied succession of images has quietly drawn to a close, ending with a negative declaration that subtly concedes the impossibility of anyone really spanning this vast space: “Even birds cannot fly the length of the sky of Wu.”

In line 16, when a new rhyme begins, the poet reappears, and we begin what might be thought of as a poem within a poem: a quatrain written on the traditional theme of climbing high—the same thematic subgenre as that invoked in Chen Zi'ang's poem “A Song on Ascending Youzhou Terrace.” Unlike Chen Zi'ang, however, Li Bai does see and is able to behold (*guan*) precisely what the genre dictates: the inexorable onward flow of a river.

With this nearly seamless transition from an anticonventional stance to the decisive borrowing of a convention, the poet makes a strong claim to ancient authenticity: both his own, as a poet openly demonstrating his mastery of the genres that constitute poetic writing in his day, and that of

the ancients, who sit at the starting point of these generic practices.  
It is this personal vision that forms the next couplet:

Yellow clouds for ten thousand miles,  
stirring the color of wind,      黃雲萬里動風色 (huáng yún wàn lǐ dòng fēng sè)  
White waves along the Nine Rivers,  
flowing snowcapped mountains.      白波九道流雪山 (bái bō jiǔ dào liú xuě shān)

This is the only truly parallel couplet in the poem—that is, parallel in the intricate way we usually associate with regulated poetry of the Tang—and it closes the quatrain within the poem. The crux of this couplet lies not in the obvious parallel imagery but in the ambiguity arising from the parallel positioning of the two verbs *dong* (to stir, to move) and *liu* (to flow). By playing with these two verbs—the possibility of their being either transitive or intransitive, or of being either verbs or modifiers—one arrives at (at least) two other possible interpretations:

Yellow clouds for ten thousand miles—  
the dynamic color of wind,      黃雲萬里動風色 (huáng yún wàn lǐ dòng fēng sè)  
White waves along the Nine Rivers—  
flowing snowcapped mountains.      白波九道流雪山 (bái bō jiǔ dào liú xuě shān)

Or

Yellow clouds for ten thousand miles—  
the color of the moving wind,      黃雲萬里動風色 (huáng yún wàn lǐ dòng fēng sè)  
White waves along the Nine Rivers—  
mountains of flowing snow.      白波九道流雪山 (bái bō jiǔ dào liú xuě shān)

The difficulty of deciding from among these interpretations is not a sign that the poem is somehow flawed, or that the reader does not know how to choose the best reading. The convergence of these multiple readings is precisely what yields the intoxicating sense of the impossibility of discerning, with our eyes, the causes of the events that unfurl before us, or of grasping the true, quixotic nature of the relationships among things.<sup>17</sup>

Abruptly, the poet returns in lines 20 and 21 and offers two unadorned

five-character lines that rhyme with neither the preceding nor the following section. In direct, declarative language, they assert that he loves these mountains and loves writing songs about them. As when he asserted that he was climbing high (line 16), Li Bai reminds us again that he is a poet, the author of the very poem we are reading. The poet next glances at the site where another poet and lover of mountains, **Xie Lingyun** (385–433), had also trod and been moved to write poetry: the Stone Mirror. Xie Lingyun stands as an inspiration for Li Bai, as a poet famous for regularly abandoning his official responsibilities to climb the heights. Xie Lingyun also stands *for* Li Bai, who now stands in his place and sees only the moss that has overgrown Xie Lingyun's traces: an unambiguous reminder of the pastness of the past, the inevitability of his own disappearance—and, perhaps, his own greatness.

These are the thoughts that trigger, in the final four lines of the poem, a retreat from the temporal: a simultaneous return to the timeless world of the immortals and to the (equally timeless) poetic language of the ancients. Assuming again, once and for all, the role of the seeker of transcendents, Li Bai's long metamorphosis appropriately culminates inconclusively, atop a mountain that exists beyond time or place, in the in-between state of desire.

Born just ten years after Li Bai's death, Bai Juyi, too, was animated by certain yearnings. Writing soon after the An Lushan Rebellion, a period characterized by one scholar as one of "disillusionment,"<sup>18</sup> Bai Juyi was an outspoken political and social critic and placed his hopes not in going off to play among the immortals but in reviving Confucian ideals and thus restoring society to its proper state; and, very much in keeping with long-held beliefs about the power of poetry, he believed that the poetic expression of Confucian values would facilitate the achievement of that goal. While these aspirations are most vividly embodied in Bai Juyi's development of *xin yuefu* (new Music Bureau poetry),<sup>19</sup> his conviction that poetry could and should be used to transform society permeates his corpus as a whole, in a language that is even more plainspoken than Chen Zi'ang's "music of metal and stone" and yet displays a sensitivity to the value of images familiar to us from the court poetry tradition.

The following two-poem cycle, "Planting Flowers on the Eastern Slope," was written during a period of exile from the capital and is a wonderful example of this blend. Indeed, not only does it evince the influence of earlier, highly diverse poets such as Chen Zi'ang, Li Bai, and **Tao Qian** (Tao Yuanming, 365?–427), but it is also said to be among the

poems that inspired the great poet **Su Shi** (1037–1101) to choose Dongpo (Eastern Slope) as his pen name. More personal than a parable, yet more obviously allegorical than the ancient-style poems of the day, Bai Juyi's poem blends the lyrical and the political in a way that would become his signature style.

## C11.4

Planting Flowers on the Eastern Slope, No. 1		
	東坡種花	(dōng pō zhòng huā)
I took my money and bought flowering trees,	持錢買花樹	(chí qián mǎi huā shù)
2 To plant on the slope east of the city.	城東坡上栽	(chéng dōng pō shàng zāi)
I purchased only those with flowers —	但購有花者	(dàn gòu yǒu huā zhě)
4 Whether peach or almond or plum.	不限桃杏梅	(bú xiàn táo xìng méi)
A hundred kinds of fruit trees all planted together,		
6 Thousands of branches blossom in turn.	百果參雜種	(bǎi guǒ cān zá zhòng)
Of Heaven's seasons, there is early and late,	千枝次第開	(qiān zhī cì dì kāi)
8 But the bounty of the soil knows not high and low.	天時有早晚	(tiān shí yǒu zǎo wǎn)
	地力無高低	(dì lì wú gāo dī)

The first poem casually—almost convivially—begins in what might be called a confessional mode, with Bai Juyi divulging an impulsive moment. Interested only in the (inherently short-lived) aesthetic pleasure provided by flowers, unconcerned with the type of fruit that flowering trees will inevitably bear, he has used his money to buy a few trees: we cannot know how many. Then, in the very next stanza, as if to underline the spontaneity and the magnitude of the gesture, the trees stand before us in greater profusion than the eye can possibly take in, already planted and flourishing in a riot of spring beauty. The “hundred kinds” and “thousands of branches” threaten to overwhelm vision, transporting the beholder from the countable world of commerce to the unaccountable world of myth. Similarly, the shift from the narrative moment in the first stanza to the eternal cyclical unfolding in the second points away from the poet's deceptively ordinary (if idiosyncratic) act to a scene of more far-reaching significance. That scene now reveals itself as unabashedly allegorical: the picture of the perfectly just society that animates Bai Juyi's dreams, where, even though time may take its toll, all members enjoy equal opportunities to grow and thrive.

Once Bai Juyi has entered the realm of allegory, he does not leave it; but neither does he abandon the persuasively vivid and personal picture of the trees themselves, the surrounding scene, and his presence there:

	Their red—the lavish scarlet of morning clouds,	紅者霞黼黼 (hóng zhě xiá yàn yàn)
10	Their white—the frosty gleam of snow.	白者雪皤皤 (bái zhě xuě ái ái)
	Roaming bees will leave here no more,	遊蜂逐不去 (yóu fēng zhú bú qù)
12	Fine birds, too, will come and perch.	好鳥亦棲來 (hǎo niǎo yì qī lái)

The color of the flowers, thriving under these ideal conditions, is a study in purity, naturally attracting the most desirable inhabitants. “Fine birds” and “roaming bees” have populated ideal poetic gardens since the Han dynasty, and so here, as in the preceding stanzas, we find images entrenched in tradition even as they appeal strongly to the senses.

	In front, a long-flowing river,	前有長流水 (qián yǒu cháng liú shuǐ)
14	Below, a small, even terrace.	下有小平臺 (xià yǒu xiǎo píng tái)
	Now, I touch the stone on the terrace,	時拂臺上石 (shí fú tái shàng shí)
16	Then, I raise a cup before the wind.	一舉風前盃 (yī jǔ fēng qián bēi)
	Flowering branches shelter my head,	花枝蔭我頭 (huā zhī yìn wǒ tóu)
18	As flower pistils drop on my breast.	花蕊落我懷 (huā ruǐ luò wǒ huái)
	Alone I drink and alone I sing,	獨酌復獨詠 (dú zhuó fù dú yǒng)
20	Unaware of the moon descending in the west.	不覺月平西 (bù jué yuè píng xī)

Continuing to blend the immediate with the ideal, the personal with the traditional, the poet has here inserted his solitary self into the scene, establishing his own place within the rhythm of things—even as he strikes a pose that invites readers to picture, almost as if they were sitting at his side, Tao Qian and Li Bai.

	The people of Ba care not for flowers,	巴俗不愛花 (bā sú bú ài huā)
22	So, all spring no one comes;	竟春無人來 (jìng chūn wú rén lái)
	There is just this drunken governor,	唯此醉太守 (wéi cǐ zuì tài shǒu)
24	All day incapable of returning home.	盡日不能迴 (jìn rì bù néng huí)

Finally, in the concluding stanza of this first poem of two, Bai Juyi

develops his similarity to Tao Qian and Li Bai, depicting himself as more than a mere lover of nature and, implicitly, more than just another gentleman who likes his wine. His references to Ba, so remote from the capital, and to his official position remind us of his status as both an exile and a *wenren* (literatus). Yet these reminders highlight rather than explain his solitude and uniqueness; his isolation is not merely circumstantial but a matter of character. His idiosyncratic nature, displayed in many of his other poems, is established in the impulsive gesture with which he opens the poem and is confirmed at the end. Like both Tao Qian and Li Bai—and like the truest of the ancients—Bai Juyi cannot but heed the urgings of his innermost spirit.

The mood of drunken dreaminess, which poetic practice has rendered almost de rigueur in this setting, momentarily overrides the social critique hinted at in earlier lines. But the poem cycle does not end here, and the second poem finds the poet in a sober, even analytical state. Far from being unaware of time's passage, he makes it the focus of his attention:

## Planting Flowers on the Eastern Slope, No. 2

	On the Eastern Slope, spring grows late;	東破春向暮 (dōng pō chūn xiàng mù)
2	Now what are the trees like?	樹木今如何 (shù mù jīn rú hé)
	Thickly, softly, the flowers finish their fall,	漠漠花落盡 (mò mò huā luò jìn)
4	While the dark shade of leaves begins to grow.	翳翳葉生初 (yì yì yè shēng chū)
	Every day I bring my boy servants,	每日領僮僕 (měi rì lǐng tóng pú)
6	To hoe and then dig a furrow.	荷鋤仍決渠 (hè chú réng jué qú)
	They clear the earth and mound it at the roots,	剗土壅其本 (chǎn tǔ yōng qí běn)
8	And guide the spring water to the trunks.	引泉溉其枯 (yǐn quán gài qí kū)
	The smallest trees are a few feet high,	小樹低數尺 (xiǎo shù dī shù chǐ)
10	The tallest over ten. <sup>20</sup>	大樹長丈餘 (dà shù cháng zhàng yú)
	After being nurtured just a short while,	封植來幾時 (fēng zhí lái jǐ shí)
12	High and low are equally lush.	高下齊扶疏 (gāo xià qí fú shū)

At this point in the poem, the contrast with the first poem could hardly be more striking. Subjective time has been replaced with the seasonal rhythm that had merely been suggested (poem 1, line 7), and the impetuosity leading to the purchase of the trees is here supplanted by the determined action necessary to sustain their lives. Too, the rustic, almost

folksy diction and syntax—the primitive parallel between the “smallest” and “tallest” trees (lines 9–10)—move the reader from one type of garden to another: from the private realm of the literatus to the communal world of the planter. Now, in the third stanza, these two worlds are bridged, as human action imitates the indiscriminating bounty of the earth, bestowing nurturance on all, regardless of position.

And, with this, the poem closes in on its true theme:

	If this is so of nurturing trees,	養樹既如此 (yǎng shù jì rú cǐ)
14	How different is it from nurturing men?	養民亦何殊 (yǎng mín yì hé shū)
	If you want the branches and leaves to grow lush,	將欲茂枝葉 (jiāng yù mào zhī yè)
16	You must first save the trunk and roots.	必先救根株 (bì xiān jiù gēn zhū)
	How do you save the trunk and roots?	云何救根株 (yún hé jiù gēn zhū)
18	By encouraging the farmers and keeping their rent fair.	勸農均賦租 (quàn nóng jūn fù zū)
	How do you make the branches and leaves grow lush?	云何茂枝葉 (yún hé mào zhī yè)
20	By easing their burdens and relaxing the laws.	省事寬刑書 (shěng shì kuān xíng shū)
	Apply this to local governance,	移此為郡政 (yí cǐ wéi jùn zhèng)
22	Then, perhaps, the people shall find relief.	庶幾甯俗蘇 (shù jǐ bì sù sū)

[BJYJJJ 2:599–601]

Perhaps the clearest evidence of Bai Juyi’s “ancientness” in this poem appears here, in the subtle irony produced by the contrast between the extreme simplicity of the lesson learned and the apparent impossibility of applying it.

For all the allusions to the lyric poets Tao Qian and Li Bai, “Planting Flowers on the Eastern Slope” is, in the end, a parable, rendered effective by the poet’s play across a range of modes and registers: from the lyric to the popular, the personal to the political, nature to man. Always, however, Bai Juyi keeps the language plain and the concerns lofty, remaining well within the parameters of what we have come to recognize as the ancient style. Like all fine poets, however, Bai Juyi does not allow the dictates of the genre—however loose they may be—to determine his composition; instead, he handles that genre to achieve his own best ends.

Paula Varsano

## NOTES

1. For further reading on Chen Zi’ang’s life and his contributions to the development of Tang poetry, see Stephen Owen, *Poetry of the Early T’ang* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press,

1977), 151–223.

2. For a history of interpretations of the title and the overall significance of these poems, see Tim W. Chan, “The ‘Ganyu’ of Chen Zi’ang: Questions on the Formation of a Poetic Genre,” *T’oung Pao* 87, nos. 1–3 (2001): 14–42.

3. An alternative version of this line substitutes *meng* (muddled) in line 7 with *xiang* (images), changing the verse to “The sense of the Obscure is not apprehended in images.”

4. For a translation of this section of the *Book of Changes*, where the dragon figures prominently, see Richard Wilhelm and Cary F. Baynes, trans., *The I Ching, or Book of Changes*, Bollingen Series 19 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1950), 3–10, 369–384.

5. In my translation, I have, in order to avoid redundancy, not rendered the word *xing*, leaving it implicit in the word “hinder.”

6. The reduplicative binome *youyou* has been associated with at least two distinct meanings since as early as the *Shijing*: the feeling of mournfulness, and the spatial property of great breadth or distance. By the time of the High Tang, as we see here, the two meanings were frequently combined.

7. Typically in this category, known as “climbing high” (*deng gao*), the poet ascends to a high place, atop either a mountain or a tower, looks out on the landscape, and, stimulated by the sight of an onward-flowing river, contemplates the passage of time and his own ephemerality.

8. In this couplet, where the mythical and terrestrial realms continue to merge, the term “Five Mountains” seems to refer to both the Five Sacred Mountains of China and the five mythical Daoist mountains of the immortals.

9. Silver River is the Chinese name for the Milky Way.

10. Incense Burner Waterfall is so named because of the cloudlike mist that rises above it.

11. “Master Xie” refers to the poet Xie Lingyun, who mentions the Stone Mirror—a round stone on the side of one of the mountains that is so smooth it reflects the light—in his poem “Entering Pengli Lake.”

12. The term “reverted cinnabar” refers to the ultimate product of the completed cycle of the Daoist alchemical transformation of cinnabar into an elixir of immortality.

13. The fixed expression “lute-heart plays all three chords,” like “reverted cinnabar,” derives from the vocabulary of Daoist alchemical practices. In this context, a “lute-heart” is one that has attained harmony, and the “three chords” refer to the central, controlling regions (known as “cinnabar fields”) of each of the three divisions of the body: upper, middle, and lower. These divisions correspond to the vertical axis of the world and, within the body, are the respective lodging points of “essence” (*jing*), “breath” (*qi*), and “spirit” (*shen*). The point of this line, then, is that the poet has achieved a perfectly harmonious state both within himself and in relation to the Dao.

14. Lu Ao is a legendary figure who was sent by the First Emperor to seek immortals, never to return. This line alludes to a story about him in the *Huainanzi*, where, after having wandered beyond this world to almost every corner of the universe—and being convinced that he was alone in having done so—he meets someone who has voyaged even more extensively than he has. As if to prove the point, the stranger declines to tarry any longer, claiming a previous engagement with (we assume) an otherwise unidentified wandering immortal named Han Man, somewhere beyond the Nine Regions (which themselves are located beyond the Nine Heavens!). By the Middle Tang, “Han Man journey” came to mean a journey to far-away places.

15. Lu Mountain, which roughly translates as “Hut Mountain,” is known for its nine folds (with nine being an auspicious number) and supposedly derives its name from the presence, during the Zhou dynasty, of seven brothers who built a hut there and practiced the Daoist arts, eventually becoming transcendents. The mountain was also the site, during the Eastern Jin dynasty, of the monastery founded by the famous Buddhist monk Huiyuan (334–416).

16. The two versions are somewhat different, with the *Zhuangzi* account offering more detail. This translation is from *Chuang Tzu: Basic Writings*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), 63. For the *Analects* version, see *Confucius: The Analects*, trans. D. C.



Lau (New York: Penguin Books, 1979), 149–150.

17. Looking back at this scene, which is the object of Li Bai's act of *guan* (beholding), it is interesting to recall Chen Zi'ang's use of the same verb. For Chen Zi'ang, this type of viewing takes him past the surface appearance of the natural world before him to reveal the invisible, ineffable workings of the Dao. When Li Bai executes the same gesture, at least in this case, his gaze rests on the surface of things; it is there, in the impenetrability and ambiguity of surface perception, that the very same workings of the Dao are to be beheld.

18. Stephen Owen, *The End of the Chinese "Middle Ages": Essays in Mid-Tang Literary Culture* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1996), 10.

19. Bai Juyi was foremost among those who took up the declining balladic tradition of *yuefu*, reviving it as a medium of social and political critique. One interesting point of comparison between Li Bai and Bai Juyi lies in their common use of the *yuefu* genre to radically different effects and ends.

20. The Chinese *chi* is approximately the equivalent of one foot, and there are ten *chi* in one *zhang*.

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## **Part 5**

# **The Five Dynasties and the Song Dynasty**

## ***Ci* Poetry**

### Short Song Lyrics (*Xiaoling*)

Beginning in the Tang dynasty (618–907), new music from Central Asia began entering China and soon became all the rage at the cosmopolitan Tang court and in Tang urban culture. From the lyrics set to this so-called banquet music (*yanyue*), there arose a new poetic genre, the *ci* (song lyric). Characterized by uneven line lengths and strictly determined rhyme and tone schemes, this genre developed into a major alternative to *shi* poetry during the Song dynasty, when it is traditionally thought to have reached its height.

Early song lyrics were associated with women and the entertainment quarters, where courtesans sang the popular new music. These female entertainers were well trained in poetry and music and enjoyed extensive social and literary interaction with intellectuals and poets. Courtesans often set to music and performed the works of well-known poets, but they also performed their own songs and exchanged poems with the literati in their circles. This “feminine” connection played an important role in setting the *ci*’s thematic range and made problematic its legitimacy as a genre for serious literary pursuit. It also makes the *ci* a particularly interesting genre from the point of view of feminism and gender studies.<sup>1</sup> The predominance of feminine themes in early *ci* meant that a female courtesan might be found singing the female-voiced song of a male poet, whose work, in turn, drew on female voices in the tradition as well as on male imitations of those voices.

Although its lines may be uneven, the *ci* is far from free verse. The poems were written to hundreds of tune patterns, each of which strictly determined the number of characters per line, the placement of rhymes,

and the position of tones. Originally the *ci* were actually sung to these tunes, but eventually the tunes themselves were lost, and all that remained were the hundreds of *ci* patterns with their many variations. To this day, one speaks of “filling in the words” to a song lyric (*tian ci*) according to the matrix associated with its tune title. The earliest *ci* poems evince a thematic relationship to their tune titles (for example, a poem to the tune “Willow Branch” is at some level about willows), but later *ci* are usually totally unrelated to the subject of the original tune.

Another name for the *ci* is *chang duan ju* (literally, long and short lines). The uneven lines of the *ci* are able to accommodate a larger number of colloquial elements and ***xuzi*** (function words [literally, empty words]) and tend to employ more continuous syntax than their *shi* counterparts. These long and short lines originally must have reflected the structure of the new music, perhaps corresponding to the number of notes in a line, for example. Although there are examples of ***yuefu*** poems that employ uneven lines (see, for example, C4.4), the majority of *yuefu* poems have lines of five characters. *Yuefu* poems also have in common with the *ci* an origin in music. However, while the *ci* of a particular tune title are united by a common prosodic matrix, *yuefu* poems that share the same title are united by their common theme or subject ([chap. 4](#)).

Some tune titles do require even lines; in fact, many of the earliest literati song lyrics in the short form (***xiaoling***, as opposed to the long form, ***manci***, which developed later) closely resemble the regulated quatrain (***jueju*** [[chap. 10](#)]), having four lines of seven characters each. But in place of the tight, unitary structure of regulated *shi* poetry ([chap. 8](#)), the structure of the *ci* is at once more fluid and less unified, displaying much less parallelism and often shifting between imagistic presentation and the quotation of inner speech. And as opposed to the suspension of time that occurs in Tang regulated verse as it moves from the temporal to the universal and back again, the *ci* moves more freely between past, present, and imagined time in its depiction of complex emotional states and processes.

During the Song, with the development of the long form of the *ci*, these characteristics became more pronounced. The ***manci*** ([chap. 13](#)) accommodates more narration and allows for the exploration of more complex and multifaceted emotional states. This is partly a result of its increased length (usually between seventy and one hundred or even two hundred characters, as opposed to fewer than fifty-eight characters in the *xiaoling*) and partly a result of the increased use of so-called line-leading

words (*lingzi*). These short words or phrases used at transitional points in the poem “increased rhythmic flexibility, enhanced semantic continuity, and highlighted the distinct turns in the complex unfolding of the poet’s feelings.”<sup>2</sup>



To put flesh on some of these generic characteristics of the *ci*, let us look at a poem by one of the best-known poets of the genre, the last emperor of the Southern Tang, **Li Yu** (937–978). The Southern Tang was one of the smaller kingdoms that arose during the post-Tang period of division known as the Five Dynasties. Taken prisoner in 975 by the new Song emperor, who eventually had him poisoned, Li Yu is credited with having broadened the thematic range of the *ci* and made it more personal.

### **C12.1**

#### **To the Tune “Crows Call at Night” (or “Pleasure at Meeting” [Xiang jian huan])**

Without a word, alone I climb the West Pavilion.

- 2 The moon is like a hook.  
In the lonely inner garden of *wutong* trees is locked late autumn.<sup>3</sup>
- 4 Cut, it doesn’t break,  
Tidied, a mess again—
- 6 This separation grief.  
It’s altogether a different kind of flavor in the heart.

[QTDWC 4.450]

										烏夜啼
										(wū yè tí)
without	word	alone	ascend	west	pavilion					無言獨上西樓 Δ
										(wú yán dú shàng xī lóu)
moon	like	hook								月如鉤 Δ
										(yuè rú gōu)
lonely	lonely	wu-	tong	deep	courtyard	lock	deep	autumn		寂寞梧桐深院鎖深秋 Δ
										(jì mò wú tóng shēn yuàn suǒ shēn qiū)
cut	not	break								剪不斷 ▲
										(jiǎn bù duàn)
tidy	still	mess								理還亂 ▲
										(lǐ huán luàn)
this	separation	grief								是離愁 Δ
										(shì lí chóu)
another	is	a	kind	taste	flavor	in	heart	[suffix]		別是一般滋味在心頭 Δ
										(bié shì yì bān zī wèi zài xīn tóu)

The most visually striking feature of this song lyric is the variation in line length. This particular tune title requires lines of three, six, and nine characters. Like the five-or seven-character lines of Tang regulated verse, these lines can be broken down into units of two and three characters each. The nine-character lines can be seen to derive their rhythm from the basic (2 +) 2 + 3 rhythm of a regulated-verse line, with the addition of one more segment of two characters at the beginning of the line. Similarly, the three-character line has one less two-character segment than a regulated-verse line. This relationship demonstrates how the semantic rhythm of the *ci* at once derives from and constitutes a deliberate departure from that of the *shi*.

Regulated *shi* poetry of the Tang requires a single rhyme in the level (*ping*) tonal category. In contrast, the *ci* permits the rhyme to be in either the level or the oblique tonal category and allows for more complex rhyme schemes. As the following diagram of the tonal patterning of this tune shows, two rhymes are in evidence. The first is in the level tonal category (as indicated by – and the hollow triangular rhyme marker Δ), and the second is in the deflected or oblique (*ze*) tonal category (as indicated by | and the solid triangular rhyme marker ▲; symbols in parentheses indicate that either tonal category is acceptable in that position) (for a discussion of tonal categories, see pp. 170–172).

(—) — (—) | — — Δ  
 | — — Δ  
 (l) | (—) — (—) || — — Δ  
 (l) (—) | ▲  
 (l) (—) | ▲  
 | — — Δ  
 (l) | (l) — (—) || — — Δ

The strict tonal alternation of regulated verse is absent, and in its place is a tonal patterning that presumably followed the contours of the poem's musical setting in some fashion. Since the music of these tunes has been lost, it is not clear exactly what form this relationship took—whether the tonal category corresponded to a melodic contour, for example, or to the length of notes (oblique tones are more abrupt, while level tones are more drawn out). As time went on, poets began to differentiate not only the two tonal categories of *ping* and *ze* but also the specific five tones themselves.

Note that rhyme occurs in each line of this poem, while in regulated verse it occurs only at the end of a couplet. This corresponds to the fact that in the song lyric, the couplet gives way to the strophe as the basic structural building block of the poem.<sup>4</sup> A strophe is a unit of one to four lines ending in a rhyme. In English translations of *ci* poems, a strophe often corresponds to a sentence, since strophes tend to function as semantic units.

In the *ci*, the stanza break comes to serve an important aesthetic function, with the expectation that it will introduce a change in meter, rhyme, setting, or mood, in a practice known as *huan tou*. The form this transition takes in any particular song lyric is a unique and important element of the poem's aesthetic effect. In this sense, the *ci* is both similar to and different from Tang regulated verse; the third couplet of a regulated *shi* poem was also expected to introduce a thematic shift or change ([chap. 8](#)). But in regulated verse, a strong metrical and tonal equivalence unites the second and third couplets, thus in effect subordinating the thematic shift to the tight unity of the poem. This is replaced in the *ci* with variation of both line length and tonal patterning.

In Li Yu's poem, the thematic transition is marked metrically by the three short lines and by a change in rhyme. The setting shifts from the external surroundings of the lonely speaker to internal musings on his or her own emotions. In the first stanza, the speaker's loneliness, confinement, and aging are reflected in the lonely *wutong* trees and the lateness of an autumn locked deep in the garden. The second stanza is an immediate, self-reflexive consideration of the speaker's grief, prized by generations of readers for the remarkable imagery of the first two lines and for the enigmatic gesturing toward a characterization of that grief in the highly colloquial concluding line. But to really appreciate the literary achievement that a poem like this one by Li Yu represents (and to which this brief reading does not begin to do justice), we should look first at the development of the genre before his time.

There are two major sources of early *ci* poetry. The first is the extensive trove of manuscripts unearthed in the first decades of the twentieth century in the Buddhist caves at Dunhuang in Gansu Province. Along with paintings and manuscripts of various religious and nonreligious genres, the find unearthed numerous early song lyrics, mostly anonymous and characterized by wide thematic variation. The second major source is the literati *ci* anthology *Huajian ji* (*Among the Flowers Collection*), which dates from the Five Dynasties period. The anthology, compiled in the mid-tenth century, collects five hundred poems, by early *ci* masters Wen Tingyun (813?–870) and **Wei Zhuang** (836–910), along with a number of poets of the court of the western kingdom of Shu. (By the Song dynasty, poets began publishing individual collections of their own *ci* poetry.)

The first poems considered are a pair of anonymous poems from Dunhuang. They constitute a dialogue between a man and a woman that plays with the conventions of female abandonment (thematic table of contents 2.3) in a lively dramatic exchange. These conventions of abandonment and neglect have a long history in the tradition, the roots of which can be traced back in the literati poetic tradition to the ***Shijing*** (*The Book of Poetry*) and the ***Chuci*** (*Lyrics of Chu*).

The first poem of the pair presents the male speaker's accusatory interrogation:

## C12.2

### To the Tune “Southern Tune,” No. 1



- Standing leaning at the beaded curtain,  
 2 With whom have you been sharing your heart?  
 The new scratches on your face are plain as day.  
 4 Who tied the love knot in your silk sash?  
 And who's torn the hem of your skirt?
- 6 Why are your cicada locks in disarray?  
 And your hairpin—why is it broken?
- 8 For whom these tear streaks in your rouge?  
 Tell me straight, here before the hall.
- 10 Don't hem and haw.

[QWDC 7.893]

							南歌子 其一	(nán gē zǐ qí yī)
slanted	leaning	bead	curtain	stand			斜隱珠簾立	(xié yǐn zhū lián lì)
emotion	matters	with	whom	intimate			情事共誰親 Δ	(qíng shì gòng shéi qīn)
distinct	clear	face	on	finger	scar	new	分明面上指痕新 Δ	(fēn míng miàn shàng zhǐ hén xīn)
silk	sash	together	heart	who	tie		羅帶同心誰綰	(luó dài tóng xīn shéi wǎn)
what	person	step	broke	skirt			甚人踏破裙 Δ	(shèn rén tà pò qún)
cicada	locks	because	what	mess			蟬鬢因何亂	(chán bìn yīn hé luàn)
gold	hairpin	because	what	broke			金釵為甚分 Δ	(jīn chāi wèi shén fēn)
red	makeup	hang	tear	miss	what	lord	紅妝垂淚憶何君 Δ	(hóng zhuāng chuí lèi yì hé jūn)
distinct	clear	hall	before	truly	tell		分明殿前實說	(fēn míng diàn qián shí shuō)
don't	low	mutter					莫沉吟 Δ	(mò chén yín)

The colloquial flavor of the poem makes itself felt in the sheer number of interrogatives (six in a ten-line poem). The male speaker enumerates in accusatory tones aspects of the woman's appearance, some of which have erotic overtones (the scratches on the face and the mussed hair). The woman's position in a doorway could be regarded as a suggestive, beckoning posture. The "love knot," or "heart" knot, in her sash would usually have been tied by her lover. The hairpin may have been the speaker's own love token.

The man's interrogating voice draws attention to his power to exact an account while, ironically, piling up proofs of his own neglect. The female speaker turns these proofs into a catalog of evidence for her own devotion in the second poem of the pair:

### C12.3

#### To the Tune “Southern Tune,” No. 2

- Since you went away  
 2 I’ve no heart to love another.  
 New scratches on my face appeared in my dreams.  
 4 I tied the love knot in my own silk sash.  
 It was the child who stepped on my hem.<sup>5</sup>  
 6 The beaded curtain mussed my cicada locks.  
 The hairpin broke along an old crack.  
 8 These streaks in my makeup are from crying for you.  
 I’m like the cypresses on South Mountain—  
 10 I’ve no heart to love another.

[QTWDC 7.893]

							南歌子 其二	(nán gē zǐ qí èr)
from	since	you	leave	after			自從君去後	(zì cóng jūn qù hòu)
without	heart	love	other	person			無心戀別人 Δ	(wú xīn liàn bié rén)
dream	in	face	on	finger	scar	new	夢中面上指痕新 Δ	(mèng zhōng miàn shàng zhǐ hén xīn)
silk	sash	together	heart	self	tie		羅帶同心自締	(luó dài tóng xīn zì wǎn)
by	reckless	child	step	broke	skirt		被蠻兒踏破裙 Δ	(bèi mán ér tà pò qún)
							蟬鬢朱簾亂	(chán bìn zhū lián luàn)
cicada	locks	bead	curtain	mess			金釵舊股分 Δ	(jīn chāi jiù gǔ fēn)
gold	hairpin	old	division	broke			紅妝垂淚哭郎君 Δ	(hóng zhuāng chuí lèi kū láng jūn)
red	makeup	hang	tear	cry	darling	you	妾是南山松柏	(qiè shì nán shān sōng bó)
I (fem.)	am	south	mount	pine	cypress		無心戀別人 Δ	(wú xīn liàn bié rén)
without	heart	love	other	person				

The second poem carries on the colloquial flavor of the first and reproduces its rhyme scheme. Note that there is a slight variation in line length between the two poems (in lines 5 and 10). This is more common in early, popular *ci* examples, but later *ci* pattern books also commonly list a number of variations on the same tune title. The first line sets the tone for the reproaches that will follow by foregrounding the fact that it is the man who had left her. Her straight answers to each question in turn enumerate evidence of the man’s neglect (“I tied the love knot in my own silk sash [since you were not here to tie it]”) and her own faithfulness (“These streaks in my makeup are from crying for you”). The speaker

uses the humble first-person feminine pronoun *qie* (literally, concubine) in line 9 and the intimate second-person address *langjun* (used by a woman for her husband or lover) in line 8; together, these place the entire defense in the context of an intimate and faithful relationship. The “cypresses” and pine trees in line 9 are traditional symbols of integrity and faithfulness because they do not change with the seasons. The poem ends with a word-for-word reiteration of the declaration of devotion in line 2.

The first poem follows the contours of the male gaze as it takes in elements of the woman’s appearance that are conventionally associated with abandonment, beginning with her posture in a doorway and then moving up and down her body. As such, it makes explicit the suggestion of eroticism that had been attached to some conventional depictions of abandoned women, especially in the sensuous palace-style poetry of the Six Dynasties period, which preceded the Tang ([chap. 7](#)). When the second speaker couches the same elements in a defense of her faithfulness, the audience associates them with other abandoned women’s voices from the folk tradition, in which male changeability is typically contrasted with female constancy. These references lend credibility and weight to the woman’s defense, although it is still difficult for us to resist questioning its reliability.

The next three poems in this selection are found in the literati *ci* anthology *Huajian ji*. Although it represented an effort to legitimize the song lyric as a genre, the *Huajian ji* is largely dominated by what were considered “feminine” themes of love and abandonment. It is the influence of the more ornate and sensuous strain of abandonment complaints, influenced by Six Dynasties palace-style poetry, that we see in this first selection, by Wen Tingyun. A skilled musician with a reputation for frequenting the pleasure quarters, Wen Tingyun is usually credited with having adapted the popular form of the *ci* for a literati audience; he also originated a number of tune patterns. The influence of literati sensibilities should be apparent in the poem’s diction and imagery.

#### **C12.4**

#### **To the Tune “On the Water Clock at Night”**

Incense in the jade burner,

2 Red wax tears

- Unbidden, reflect an autumn mood in the painted hall.
- 4 Blackened brows fade,  
Cloud locks are tousled,
- 6 The night is long, quilt and pillow cold.  
*Wutong* trees and
- 8 Third-watch rain are  
Unaware of separation throes.
- 10 Leaf after leaf,  
Sound by sound
- 12 Drips on the empty steps 'til dawn.

[QTDWC 2.210]

						更漏子	(gēng lòu zǐ)
jade	burner	incense				玉鑪香	(yù lú xiāng)
red	wax	tears				紅蠟淚 ▲	(hóng là lèi)
unbidden	reflect	painted	hall	autumn	mood	偏照畫堂秋思 ▲	(piān zhào huà táng qiū sī) <sup>6</sup>
eyebrow	black	thin				眉翠薄	(méi cuì bó)
locks	cloud	spoiled				鬢雲殘 △	(bìn yún cán)
night	long	quilt	pillow	cold		夜長衾枕寒 △	(yè cháng qīn zhěn hán)
						梧桐樹 ▲	(wú tóng shù)
wu-	tong	tree				三更雨 ▲	(sān gēng yǔ)
third	watch	rain				不道離情正苦 ▲	(bú dào lí qíng zhèng kǔ)
not	know	separation	feelings	just	bitter	一葉葉	(yí yè yè)
one	leaf	leaf				一聲聲 △	(yí shēng shēng)
one	sound	sound				空階滴到明 △	(kōng jiē dī dào míng)
empty	step	drip	until	light			

The neglect of makeup, the cold bedding and pillow, and the woman's sleeplessness are clear markers of the abandonment convention. The context of the "painted hall" suggests a high-class subject, and the presentation of small details of her appearance in bed alone (her fading brows and tousled locks on a cold pillow) subtly suggest the presence of a male voyeur.

Several things immediately set this poem apart from the anonymous examples from Dunhuang we have just looked at. Whereas both the male and female speakers in the two poems were just that—*speakers*—this poem presents the abandoned woman's emotional state through a depiction first of the interior scene in the first stanza, and then of the exterior scene in the second. The only voice we hear is that of the rain dripping onto or from the large leaves of the *wutong* tree, in which nature

seems to conspire to compound the woman's grief. But from the very beginning, elements of the woman's surroundings are made to bear emotional weight. The candle's tears in line 2 are a typical example of the poetic device of fusing emotion and scene (*qing jing jiao rong*). This practice of imbuing physical elements of the scene with human emotion brings to mind the Western notion of the "pathetic fallacy," a term coined by John Ruskin in the nineteenth century for a practice he deplored.

In lines 3 and 9, *pian* (unbidden) and *zheng* (just, exactly) are what are known as "empty words" (*xuzi*), particles that lack concrete referents but that add instead to the subjective and emotional quality of the lines. The use of empty words, or function words, contributes to the *ci*'s characteristic tendency to qualify its imagistic presentation. The rough parallelism discernible in the relationships between the paired three-character lines suggests a greater degree of attention to poetic craft than we saw in the Dunhuang poems; this is, of course, in keeping with the poem's literati authorship.

A second example of Wen Tingyun's song lyrics presents a more eroticized and objectified picture of its female subject. The poem's more suggestive quality is perhaps not surprising, given that it is less a complaint of abandonment than a depiction of morning ennui in the context of a new love affair.

### C12.5

#### To the Tune "Buddha-Like Barbarian"

- Layer on layer of little hills, golds shimmer and fade,  
2 Cloud locks hover over the fragrant snow of a cheek.  
Lazily rising to paint on moth eyebrows,  
4 Dallying with makeup and hair.

- Blossoms are mirrored behind and before,  
6 Flower faces reflect one another.  
Newly embroidered on a jacket of silk  
8 Are pair after pair of golden partridges.

[QTDWC 2.194]

						菩薩蠻	(pú sà mán)
small	hill	repeat	pile up	gold	bright	extinguish	小山重疊金明滅 ▲ (xiǎo shān chóng dié jīn míng miè)
locks	cloud	about to	cross	fragrant	cheek	snow	鬢雲欲度香腮雪 ▲ (bìn yún yù dù xiāng sāi xuě)
lazy	arise	paint	moth	brows			懶起畫蛾眉 △ (lǎn qǐ huà é méi)
do	makeup	comb	wash	late			弄妝梳洗遲 △ (nòng zhuāng shū xǐ chí)
reflect	flower	before	behind	mirror			照花前後鏡 ▲ (zhào huā qián hòu jìng)
flower	face	mutual	each other	reflect			花面交相映 ▲ (huā miàn jiāo xiāng yìng)
new	written	embroidered	silk gauze	jacket			新帖繡羅襦 △ (xīn tiē xiù luó rú)
pair	pair	gold	partridge	partridge			雙雙金鸂鶒 △ (shuāng shuāng jīn xī chì)

This poem employs more elevated diction and more ornate imagery than “On the Water Clock at Night.” In general, it is imagistically denser, using less-continuous syntax and more juxtaposition of imagery. Set entirely in the interior of the subject’s intimate boudoir, the poem presents a series of images through which the actions of the subject’s morning routine become perceptible. The first two lines, often cited by subsequent critics, evoke the image of the female figure by reference to the resplendent screen that hides her in line 1, and the smallest physical detail of her recumbent pose in line 2. The potential motion implicit in the locks of hair that are, literally, about to cross her white cheek makes this line particularly memorable. These loosely connected images set off the progression of the voyeur’s gaze as the subject languidly rises, attends to her hair and makeup, and examines herself in the mirror.

Despite its intimacy, the observer’s perspective on the female subject remains external, the only suggestions of the woman’s emotional state being her laziness at her toilet and the pairs of partridges (suggesting conjugal happiness) that she has recently embroidered. None of the imagery, from the shimmering golden hills in line 1 to the flowers in the woman’s hair in lines 5 and 6, reflected in mirrors in front of and behind her, seems to have any emotional function other than to highlight and reflect the woman’s beauty in her ornate setting. At the same time, this contentment with a surface treatment of its subject (of which the reflection of a reflection in lines 5 and 6 is emblematic) is itself important to the poem’s emotional effect. Although the woman has no apparent cause for discontent, the motions of her morning routine are imbued with a sense of ennui.

Morning languor appears in a more melancholy context in this poem by Wei Zhuang, also from the *Huajian ji*. Wei Zhuang’s poems are generally considered more directly lyrical than those of Wen Tingyun. Here this

quality is particularly evident in the first stanza:

## C12.6

### To the Tune “Audience at Golden Gate”

- Vain to remember him,  
2 No way to get news through.  
Chang’e in the heavens doesn’t recognize me.  
4 Where shall I seek him, to send him a letter?

- Waking, languid, from new sleep,  
6 Can’t bear to take up the remains of his letter.  
A courtyard full of fallen blossoms—spring is lonely, lonely  
8 —Heartbreaking, the fragrant grasses green.

[QTWDC 5.542]

						謁金門	(yè jīn mén)			
vain	each other	remember				空相憶▲	(kōng xiāng yì)			
no	strategy	obtain	pass along	information	information	無計得傳消息▲	(wú jì dé chuán xiāo xī)			
heaven on		Chang’-	e	person	not	know	天上嫦娥人不識▲	(tiān shàng cháng é rén bù shí)		
send	letter	what	place	seek			寄書何處覓▲	(jì shū hé chù mì)		
new	sleep	wake	up	without	strength			新睡覺來無力▲	(xīn shuì jué lái wú lì)	
not	bear	lift	his	letter	remains			不忍把伊書跡▲	(bù rěn bǎ yī shū jì)	
whole	garden	fall	blossom	spring	lonely	lonely			滿院落花春寂寂▲	(mǎn yuàn luò huā chūn jì jì)
break	gut	fragrant	grass	jade-green					斷腸芳草碧▲	(duàn cháng fāng cǎo bì)

The general sense of vanity (and, in particular, the frustration of communication) with which the poem begins is an element of the abandonment convention. Other conventional elements include the indifference of nature or heaven (speakers would commonly appeal to Chang’e, the goddess of the moon, for help, for presumably she would be able to see the absent lover) and the references to the end of spring and the irretrievable loss of time. The first stanza is entirely devoted to the subject’s inner speech, while the second introduces natural imagery that is made to bear the full weight of her emotion. Not only have the blossoms fallen, but the courtyard is full of them, in a reflection of the speaker’s overwhelming, overflowing sense of loss. The spring is described as lonely. Notably absent are details of the boudoir in which

she wakes. Instead, all the imagery suggests the reflection of her interior thoughts in the exterior world, in another example of the fusion of feeling and scene.

It is important to note that in the last line, the relationship of heartbreak in the first two characters with the “fragrant grasses green” is not explicit. As translated here, the heartbreak applies to the speaker, who sees the grasses, the color of which reminds her, again, of late spring and hence of the irretrievable loss of time. Another translation would be “Heartbroken, the fragrant grasses green,” in which the emotion is linked more explicitly to the grasses. While in either case the emotion must ultimately be traced back to the speaker, the poetic effect is quite different. In Chinese, these phrases can simply be juxtaposed. No decision needs to be made concerning the attribution of the emotion. This is one of the ubiquitous problems in the translation of Chinese poetry into English: the translator is often forced to make a choice one way or the other in order to craft a smooth English line. The same is true for the choice of pronoun where none is present in the original or for the choice of verb tense. For the Chinese reader, these details can remain unspecified, allowing the poem to retain its polysemous and indeterminate, evocative quality.

A similar interior perspective and direct, unornamented style characterize the *ci* poems of Li Yu, with whose poem we started this chapter. Li Yu is generally considered to have been a total failure as a political leader—indeed, some have suggested that his failure in this arena may have been a prerequisite of sorts for his accomplishment in the literary arena. The following poem should allow us to observe how Li Yu takes the genre to a new level of personal expression.

### **C12.7**

#### **To the Tune “Beautiful Lady Yu”**

- Spring flowers, autumn moon—when will they end?  
2 Past affairs—who knows how many?  
Last night in the small pavilion the east wind came again.  
4 I dare not turn my head toward my homeland in the moonlight.
- The inlaid balustrade and jade stairs must still be there  
6 —It’s only the youthful faces that have changed.



I ask you, how much sorrow can there be?  
 8 Just as much as a river full of spring waters, flowing east.

[QTDWC 4.444]

									虞美人 (yú měi rén)
spring	flower	autumn	moon	what	time	end			春花秋月何時了 ▲ (chūn huā qiū yuè hé shí liǎo)
past	affair	know	much	few					往事知多少 ▲ (wǎng shì zhī duō shǎo)
small	pavilion	yesterday	night	again	east	wind			小樓昨夜又東風 Δ (xiǎo lóu zuó yè yòu dōng fēng)
home	land	not	dare	turn	head	moon	light	in	故國不堪回首月明中 Δ (gù guó bù kān huí shǒu yuè míng zhōng)
inlay	balustrade	jade	step	should	still	be there			雕闌玉砌應猶在 ▲ (diāo lán yù qì yīng yóu zài)
only	is	crimson	face	change					只是朱顏改 ▲ (zhǐ shì zhū yán gǎi)
ask	you	can	be	how	much	worry			問君能有幾多愁 Δ (wèn jūn néng yǒu jǐ duō chóu)
just	like	a	river	spring	water	toward	east	flow	恰似一江春水向東流 Δ (qià sì yì jiāng chūn shuǐ xiàng dōng liú)

Certain elements are familiar from the female-voiced abandonment complaints we have already seen: the interrogatives, the use of the second-person pronoun *jūn*, the colloquial elements and empty words, like *bukan* (not dare) and *qiasì* (just like). The east wind, like the rain in Wen Tingyun's "On the Water Clock at Night," seems to conspire against the speaker by coming yet again. But the context is less particular and more universal and philosophical. The opening parallelism, "spring flowers, autumn moon," evokes a sense of the entirety of time (by reference to opposing seasons) and nature (by its opposition of an earthly with a cosmic image). When read in the light of the reference to the speaker's "homeland" in line 4, the "past affairs" transcend the personal to encompass national history. At the same time, the particularity of the speaker's emotion is retained. Line 3 situates the speaker in a specific place at a specific time, and line 4 gestures toward the intensity of his emotion by depicting him unable even to look toward the object of his nostalgia (and here it is a place, not a person, for which the speaker longs). The poem closes with a question and an answer that

once again link emotion and scene. Unlike the typical fusion of feeling and scene, however, in which the connection between the two remains implicit, here the speaker seems to cast about in his mind for an image that adequately captures the swelling and unstoppable quality of his emotion, which he then offers in an explicitly apt comparison: *qiasi* (just as much as) a flooded river overflowing with the melting snows of spring.

The gender of the speaker in this poem is ambiguous, but since critics traditionally have interpreted Li Yu's poems in the light of the details of his biography, the speaker has usually been assumed to be the poet himself. Because this and others of Li Yu's best poems date from the period of his captivity at the Song court, references to the homeland and changed human circumstances are easy to connect to Li Yu's personal situation.

The next poem has variously been attributed to Feng Yansi (903–960) (under the tune title “Magpie Perching on a Branch”) of the Southern Tang, who flourished during the reign of Li Yu's father, and to Ouyang Xiu (1007–1072), a statesman and an essayist of the Northern Song. Feng Yansi's *ci* poetry consistently draws on the conventions of abandonment complaints, and Ouyang Xiu's *ci* poetry also falls within the tradition of Feng and the poets anthologized in the *Huajian ji*. For this reason, the dispute over the poem's authorship is difficult to resolve. The *ci* had, by the Northern Song, become a popular pursuit of intellectuals, functioning as a sort of parallel genre to the *shi* that, while it lacked the *shi*'s seriousness of subject matter, was considered an artistic pursuit worthy of a public figure such as Ouyang Xiu. The *shi* and *ci* at this point occupied different spheres, characterized by a division of labor in which the *ci* was assigned the treatment of delicate emotions. If the *shi* was seen as a vehicle of the will or intent (***shi yan zhi*** [the *shi* gives voice to the intent]), then the *ci* was seen as a vehicle of feeling (*ci yan qing* [the *ci* gives voice to emotion]).

### C12.8

#### To the Tune “Butterflies Linger over Flowers” (or “Magpie Perching on a Branch” [Que ta zhi])

- Deep in the walled garden, deep—how deep?
- 2 Mist stacks on willows,  
Uncountable layers of screens and blinds.
- 4 The jade bridle and ornate saddle are in the brothel district—Though

- the tower is tall, one can't see Zhangtai Road.<sup>7</sup>
- 6 A driving rain, a mad wind, late in the third month.  
A door keeps out the twilight,
- 8 But there's no way to keep spring from going.  
With tear-filled eyes I ask the blossoms,  
but the blossoms do not answer—
- 10 In a swirl of red they fly into the swings.

[QTDWC 4.369]

							蝶戀花	(dié liàn huā)
courtyard	garden	deep	deep	deep	how	much	庭院深深深幾許 ▲	(tíng yuàn shēn shēn shēn jǐ xǔ)
willow	willow	pile	mist				楊柳堆煙	(yáng liǔ duī yān)
blinds	screen	without	layer	number			簾幕無重數 ▲	(lián mù wú chóng shù)
jade	reins	painted	saddle	play	seduce	place	玉勒琤鞍遊冶處 ▲	(yù lè chē ān yóu yě chù)
tower	tall	not	see	Zhang-	tai	road	樓高不見章臺路 ▲	(lóu gāo bú jiàn zhāng tái lù)
rain	horizontal	wind	crazy	third	month	end	雨橫風狂三月暮 ▲	(yǔ héng fēng kuáng sān yuè mù)
door	cover	dusk	dusk				門掩黃昏	(mén yǎn huáng hūn)
without	strategy	retain	spring	stop			無計留春住 ▲	(wú jì liú chūn zhù)
tear	eye	ask	flower	flower	not	speak	淚眼問花花不語 ▲	(lèi yǎn wèn huā huā bù yǔ)
mess	red	fly	enter	swings	swings	go	亂紅飛入秋千去 ▲	(luàn hóng fēi rù qiū qiān qù)

The first stanza piles up images of blocked vision and seclusion, multiplied indefinitely by the question “how deep?” and the adjective “uncountable.” The reference to the absent lover’s bridle and saddle in the entertainment district clearly marks the poem as an abandonment complaint. The poem moves from scene to feeling, in a typical progression known as “entering the emotion through the scene” (*you jing ru qing*), but then it closes with a particularly memorable natural image, for which the poem has been prized. Unlike Li Yu’s speaker in “Beautiful Lady Yu,” the speaker in “Butterflies Linging over Flowers” does not make explicit her closing question; the dynamic response of the flowers, rather than answering the speaker’s unspoken question, seems to embody her chaos of swirling emotion. **Wang Guowei** (1877–1927), a late Qing critic strongly influenced by Western aesthetics and philosophy, cited these last two lines as an example of a “personal” scene or state, a *you wo zhi jing*, as opposed to what he regarded as the superior impersonal, or literally “selfless,” scene or state, the *wu wo zhi jing* (chap. 6). These lines are also a masterful example of the fusion of

feeling and scene and an ingenious variation on the image of fallen blossoms (signifying the end of spring and the passage of time). Even while the blossoms mirror the speaker's emotions, they also refuse to serve as her interlocutor; she asks, but they do not speak, leaving her alone with her grief. While male speakers in *shi* poems tend to find communion and consolation in nature, in this and other female-voiced *ci* poems, nature is more often unfeeling, adding to the speaker's grief, or at least failing to provide the comfort she seeks.

Our final poet, Yan Shu (991–1055), was another Northern Song statesman whose *ci* poetry followed in the tradition of Feng Yansi and the *Huajian ji* poets. With Ouyang Xiu, he is considered a master of the *xiaoling*. These poets' song lyrics remain largely within the "delicate and restrained" **wanyue** school, as opposed to the "bold and unrestrained" or heroic **haofang** school, which developed as the thematic range of the *ci* broadened even further during the Song. The following poem is acclaimed for its subtle and implicit expression of separation grief. This degree of implicitness, in which there is no explicit reference to the object of the speaker's complaint, has traditionally been praised by critics with the phrase "not a word verbalizes complaint" (*wu yi zi yan yuan*).

## C12.9

### To the Tune "Sand in Silk-Washing Stream"

- A new song, a cup of wine;  
 2 Last year's weather at the old pond terrace.  
 The setting sun sinks in the west—when to return?  
 4 Do what one may, blossoms will fall;  
 As if we knew each other, the swallows come back.  
 6 In the little garden I pace a fragrant path alone.

[QSC 1:89]

浣溪沙 (huàn xī shā)						
one	tune	new	song lyric	wine	one	cup
last	year	weather	weather	old	pond	terrace
sunset	sun	west	descend	what	time	return
without	can	bear	what	flower	fall	go
as if	before	each other	know	swallow	return	come
small	garden	fragrant	path	alone	pace	pace

浣溪沙

(huàn xī shā)

一曲新詞酒一杯 Δ (yī qǔ xīn cí jiǔ yì bēi)

去年天氣舊池臺 (qù nián tiān qì jiù chí tái)

夕陽西下幾時回 Δ (xī yáng xī xià jǐ shí huí)

無可奈何花落去 (wú kě nài hé huā luò qù)

似曾相識燕歸來 Δ (sì céng xiāng shí yàn guī lái)

小園香徑獨徘徊 Δ (xiǎo yuán xiāng jìng dú pái huái)

The even, seven-character lines of this *ci* might suggest a similarity to regulated verse, except for the number of lines (six) and the absence of parallelism in the first stanza. All three lines of the first stanza are independent strophes disconnected from one another, so that the reader must construct the relationship between them. Were the new tune and the cup of new wine situated at the old pond terrace last year, or are they in the present? Is the sunset of line 3 happening now, or is it remembered? Or, again, is the sunset adopted simply as a philosophical emblem of the past and of loss? In contrast to the relative discontinuity of these three lines, the first two lines of the second stanza are, in fact, a very well regarded parallel couplet, complete with tonal opposition.

The thoughts of the speaker, who paces alone on the fallen blossoms that make the path fragrant, remain veiled. The only explicit reference to the speaker's situation is in the word "alone," but several other elements lead us to read this as a poem about separation grief (notably, a common theme of *shi* poetry). There is the practice of sending off a friend with a cup of wine, the recollection of something that happened "last year," the question of when something or someone (the sun or the friend) will come back, the return of the swallows. But the emotion remains at arm's length, as vague as the sense of familiarity aroused by the swallows: "as if we knew each other."

If each line of the first stanza is disconnected from the next, each line of the second stanza approaches the speaker's emotion from a different direction. Yan Shu's poem addresses its subject from without, leaving an empty space at the center where the complaint (*yuan*) remains unspoken.



In conclusion, it may be useful to review some characteristics of the shorter, *xiaoling*, *ci* poems, which have been the subject of this chapter. Generally consisting of two stanzas (although some have only one), the poems are structurally simpler than the more elaborate *manci* ([chap. 13](#)). Often the break between stanzas marks a move from past to present, from interior to exterior, from speech to scene, or vice versa. In the *manci*, these shifts become more complex. Early literati *ci* may betray the influence of *shi* aesthetics in their use of juxtaposed scenes and states; although the *ci* allows more elaboration of the relationship between them than does the *shi*, it remains for the *manci* to take this elaboration further,

incorporating descriptive and narrative sequences that the *xiaoling* could never accommodate. Thematically, the *xiaoling* tends to restrict itself to subjects involving the delicate and personal emotions surrounding love, abandonment, separation, or nostalgia, treating these subjects with a characteristic allusiveness that accords with its brevity and concision. The *manci* came to accommodate a broader variety of subjects and a greater range of emotion, which its length and complexity allowed it to treat in a more exhaustive manner. But the *xiaoling* set the stage for the *manci* and the development of the *haofang* (heroic) style by adapting a popular medium for literati use and carving a niche for it in the hierarchy of literary forms that were acceptable for intellectual pursuit.

Maija Bell Samei

#### NOTES

1. My approach in this chapter is certainly informed by these perspectives, although it is by no means strictly feminist.
2. Shuen-fu Lin, "The Formation of a Distinct Generic Identity for *Tz'u*," in *Voices of the Song Lyric in China*, ed. Pauline Yu (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 21.
3. The *wutong* is the Chinese parasol tree (*Firmiana simplex*).
4. Shuen-fu Lin, *The Transformation of the Chinese Lyrical Tradition: Chiang K'uei and Southern Sung Tz'u Poetry* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978), 106–107.
5. Other manuscripts have a closely related character meaning "monkey" in place of "child."
6. The character *sì* is read here with the fourth tone because the pattern for this tune title requires an oblique tone rhyme in this position.
7. Zhangtai was a street in Han dynasty Chang'an that became a euphemism for the brothel district.

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## Ci Poetry

### Long Song Lyrics (*Manci*)

The form of the song lyric discussed in [chapter 12](#) is, as suggested by the Chinese term *xiaoling*, comparatively short and small in scale. In this chapter, we shall look at another form of the genre, the “long song lyric” (*manci*). Our examination will reveal that the differences between these two forms are found not only in their length but, more importantly, also in their structure and their capacity for poetic description and expression.

The origin of the *manci*, like that of the *xiaoling*, can be traced back to the popular song-verse tradition of the Middle Tang (ca. 750), but, unlike the *xiaoling*, it took much longer for the *manci* to be appropriated by literati poets and to be developed, in the Song dynasty, into a major poetic genre. An important reason is that the musicality of the *manci*—or *manqu ci* (slow-paced song verse)—is much more complicated than that of the *xiaoling*. Whereas the professional songwriters were masters of tones and beats but lacked the literary caliber to advance the poetic quality of their works, the educated elite—when they deigned to practice this “low” genre, with its irresistible melodious appeal—found its musical features too complicated for dilettantes. Refining this art form and bringing its literary potential to the full required the combination of a popular musician’s ear and a scholar’s pen. This rare combination was nowhere to be found until the eleventh century, when Liu Yong (987–1053) appeared on the scene.

Even when he wrote about love, the most stereotyped subject of the song lyric, Liu Yong did not just repeat clichés and recycle stock poetic situations. In lyrics on the new subjects he introduced to the genre, he produced descriptions of various aspects of urban life, a detailed



delineation of personal feelings of a frustrated scholar, and the landscape seen through the eyes of a melancholy wanderer. The poetic form of the shorter *xiaoling* could not meet his needs. He therefore turned his eyes and ears to the longer form offered by the *manci*.

While other literati poets, with few exceptions, were interested in or, rather, capable of writing only *xiaoling* when they composed song lyrics, Liu Yong wrote mostly *manci*. Not satisfied with merely putting words to the existing tunes, he composed new tunes to better carry his words. For him, a *manci* should not be an elongated *xiaoling* but an organism permitting an elaborate description and narration to develop with a certain order and logic. To achieve this, he drew on the descriptive syntax of the rhymed prose (*fu*) of past ages, on the one hand, and, on the other, learned from the flexible everyday language of the popular tradition. The descriptive power of his song lyrics benefited most, however, from his understanding of the intrinsic musicality of the *manci* from the popular tradition. The collection of his works is appropriately titled *Collection of Musical Pieces* (*Yue zhang ji*): he set many of his songs in specific musical keys (*diao*), rarely done by other scholar-poets, to ensure that they were sung in the right way to achieve optimal effects. His sensitive awareness of the musicality of the song lyrics of the popular tradition, especially the contours of the sound patterns or structural shapes of the songs, as realized in the performances by musicians and singers, taught him how to organize an extended poetic presentation. One of the most effective organizational devices he developed was the *lingzi* (leading word). Used at juncture points in a description or narration, leading words comment on the perceptual experiences, facilitate continuity, ease transitions, help create the desired rhythm, control sound flow, and, perhaps most importantly, reveal the relationship between the component parts of the descriptive or narrative whole, whether this relationship is linear, multilayered, or both.<sup>1</sup>

Most of Liu Yong's innovations became the generic features of the *manci*. He left to the *ci* poets who followed a powerful poetic vehicle capable of tasks unimaginable in the *xiaoling*, such as the multifaceted description of scenery, the presentation of the twists and turns of complicated human feelings, and the narration of the drama of human relationships.

Liu Yong's contribution to the establishment of *manci* conventions was unanimously acknowledged by the *ci* practitioners and critics who came after him. Nonetheless, his *manci* works were considered by many as

vulgar and his language as excessively low. The true reason for such harsh criticism was that both his conduct in private life and the self-image he created in some of his songs showed him as a songwriter from the pleasure quarters more than as a member of the educated elite.

Among his critics was **Su Shi** (1037–1101), whose versatile talent and comprehensive achievements secured him a leading position in almost every sphere of the cultural and literary activities of his time. Although Su Shi was critical of Liu Yong's language, which was the living language used by the singers and entertainers of the time, he admired Liu Yong's art. In his own creative experiments with the new *manci* form, he carried on the work that Liu Yong had started.

What Su Shi did to the song lyric was quite appropriately summarized as “treating *ci* as *shi*,” and he was both praised and criticized for this practice. The consequence of his experiment was augmented by his position as a formidable figure on the literary scene, with a sensitive personality and a stock of personal experience enriched by his eventful involvement in the political life of his day. After him, no one could say that the *ci* was only a low genre.

Some critics questioned whether the new type of song lyric he introduced could still be called *ci*. For example, in her essay “A Critique of the Song Lyric” (*Ci lun*), his younger contemporary **Li Qingzhao** (1084–1151) dismissed his *ci* works as “nothing but *shi* poems with irregular lines.” A fine musician and an accomplished *ci* writer herself, Li Qingzhao insisted on a rigorous identity of the song lyric as an independent poetic genre. She advocated a careful distinction between the *ci* and the *shi*. Of the many features of the genre she discussed in her essay, the most important was the musicality of the *ci* tune. Although she claimed that Liu Yong's language was “as low as dirt,” she commended him for having been a connoisseur of the music of the *ci*.

The expressive power and pliability of the *manci* form are also seen in the works of **Xin Qiji** (1140–1207). Besides being a *ci* poet, Xin was first of all a man of action, having participated in his youth in a major military uprising against the **Jurchens**, who ruled the northern part of China, and having made a name for himself trying to accomplish the impossible task of reclaiming the lost territory of central China after he went to the south and joined the Southern Song (1127–1279) court. His *manci* works are informed by his legendary life experiences and his ebullient personality. In his hands, the poetic form that was originally fit for only boudoir sentiments became an effective vehicle for conveying the complicated

feelings and emotions of a larger-than-life heroic figure.



In Liu Yong's best lyrics, the poetic mood and the sentiment of the persona are conveyed through the thoughtful presentation of elaborate descriptions of scenery and the narration of a series of poetic events:

### **C13.1**

#### **To the Tune “Eight Beats of a Ganzhou Song”**

- I face the splashing evening shower sprinkling from the sky over the  
river
- 2 And washing clean the cool autumn.  
Gradually the pressing frosty wind gets more and more chilly,
- 4 The mountain passes and rivers turn bleak,  
While the last ray of the sun lingers on the balcony.
- 6 Here and there the red withers and the green decays—  
Slowly nature's blossoms fade.
- 8 Only the water of the Yangtze  
Silently flows east.
- 10 I cannot bear to ascend the height and look into the distance.  
I look toward my homeland afar, not to be seen;
- 12 Thoughts of returning home just would not stop.  
I sigh over my wanderings these years;
- 14 What is it that keeps me here?  
I imagine my fair one is now gazing earnestly out of her window,
- 16 Mistaking again and again some returning boat on the horizon for  
mine.  
How could she know that I, leaning against the balustrade here,
- 18 Am lost in sorrow?

[QSC 1:43]

八聲甘州

(*bā shēng gān zhōu*)

face	pattering	pattering	evening	rain	river	sky	對瀟瀟暮雨灑江天
one	round	wash	clear	autumn			( <i>duì xiāo xiāo mù yǔ sǎ jiāng tiān</i> )
gradually	frosty	wind	chilly	sad			一番洗清秋 Δ
							( <i>yī fān xǐ qīng qiū</i> )
pass	river	cold	bleak				漸霜風淒慘
							( <i>jiàn shuāng fēng qī cǎn</i> )
remnant	sunshine	on	building				關河冷落
							( <i>guān hé lěng luò</i> )
							殘照當樓 Δ
							( <i>cán zhào dāng lóu</i> )
every	place	red	wither	green	decay		是處紅衰翠減
							( <i>shì chù hóng shuāi cuì jiǎn</i> )
slowly	slowly	things	flower	cease			苒苒物華休 Δ
							( <i>rǎn rǎn wù huā xiū</i> )
only	have	long	river	water			惟有長江水
							( <i>wéi yǒu cháng jiāng shuǐ</i> )
without	word	east	flow				無語東流 Δ
							( <i>wú yǔ dōng liú</i> )
not	bear	ascend	height	face	far		不忍登高臨遠
							( <i>bù rěn dēng gāo lín yuǎn</i> )
watch	old	homeland	vague	vague			望故鄉渺邈
							( <i>wàng gù xiāng miǎo miǎo</i> )
return	thoughts	hard	withdraw				歸思難收 Δ
							( <i>guī sī nán shōu</i> )
sigh	year	come	step	trace			數年來蹤跡
							( <i>shù nián lái zōng jì</i> )
what	thing	painfully	delay	linger			何事苦淹留 Δ
							( <i>hé shì kǔ yān liú</i> )
imagine	fair	person	makeup	building	longing	watch	想佳人、妝樓顚望
							( <i>xiǎng jiā rén zhuāng lóu yǎng wàng</i> )
mistake	several	time	heaven	border	recognize	return	誤幾回、天際識歸舟 Δ
							( <i>wù jǐ huí tiān jì shí guī zhōu</i> )
how	know	I	lean	balustrade	rail	place	爭知我、倚闌干處
							( <i>zhēng zhī wǒ yǐ lán gān chù</i> )
right	such	concentrate	sorrow				正恁凝愁 Δ
							( <i>zhèng nèn níng chóu</i> )

The verb “[I] face” at the very beginning of the poem seems to be unnecessary, since even without it, the scene’s being in front of the persona is quite obvious. But it is precisely words of this kind that deserve our special attention. They are typical examples of leading words, the most important device that Liu Yong developed for the *manci* form.

In the first stanza, the autumn scene is not described but is methodically presented in four steps. A leading word (or phrase) is used to lead and to define each step, explaining which aspect of autumn is being perceived and from what perspective. The four steps are linked in such a way that they echo one another while moving along in linear order, reflecting nuanced changes in the persona’s mood as he undergoes four different phases in his sensual experience of autumn.

The first leading word, “face,” which stands at the beginning of the song and introduces the evening scene (lines 1–2), highlights the active interaction between the gazer and what is gazed and intensifies the impact of the “cool autumn” (line 2) on the poet. The second step (lines 3–5) follows by reflecting on that coolness of the season. The persona’s sensual perception takes a turn here. While the first step emphasizes—as suggested by the leading word “face”—the spatial vastness of nature, the second step probes its temporal depth. The leading word “gradually” (line 3) tells how the autumn chill invades slowly but inexorably, turning mountains and rivers “bleak” (line 4). The lingering setting sun, the “remnant” (*can*) of the day that has passed (line 5), also implies the gradual yet unstoppable lapse of time and symbolizes the dying of the year. The time element in the second step has some bearing on the persona as well: he has been lingering on the balcony long enough to notice the inching away of the sunlight and the ever-advancing autumn.

The phrase “here and there,” which marks the beginning of the third step (lines 6–7), also performs a leading function. It indicates that the persona now turns his eye to the things around him and sees the signs of dying and decay. The spatial (“here and there”) and the temporal (“slowly” [line 7]) aspects of autumn are subjected to scrutiny one more time. The persona then looks afar again to see if there is anything alive, and he finds that “only”—thus begins the fourth step (lines 8–9)—the Yangtze is in movement. Symbolizing the unending flow of time, the eastward-flowing river never stops. The image of the ceaselessly flowing

river underscores the bleakness of the scene in the previous lines.

The purpose of this carefully planned four-step presentation of autumn is to prepare for the poet's emotional response in the second stanza. Here we see the structural function of the stanzaic division in the song lyric ([chap. 12](#)). In Liu Yong's *manci*, the division plays an even more important role in the organization of his poetic description and narration.

Again, a step-by-step scheme becomes visible as the persona unfolds his inner thoughts in the second stanza. It begins where the first stanza leaves off, but not without a twist first—the persona admits in line 10 that he “cannot bear to ascend the height” and look afar. But this is exactly what he does in lines 11 and 12. From the vantage point of a balcony, he watches, at a time of year when things are decaying, the Yangtze River and lets its eastward-flowing water carry his thoughts to his faraway homeland. Careful readers might have noticed that this segment is preceded by the leading word “[I] look” (line 11). Actually, the next segment (lines 13–14) and the segment that follows (lines 15–16) also begin with leading words, while the concluding segment (lines 17–18) opens with a multisyllabic leading phrase, “How could she know.” These leading words not only mark the juncture points in the development of the persona's emotions and feelings, but, more significantly, also point out or foretell the direction of his perceptions and thoughts: after what happens in the first stanza, where the poet's mood is affected by his multifaceted experience of autumn, he *looks* (*wang*) afar and becomes homesick; he then retreats into himself, *sighing* (*tan*) over his situation. The longing and regret cause his thoughts to again go out and into the far distance, and he *imagines* (*xiang*) that his “fair one,” in another place and from another balcony, is at that moment looking at the Yangtze and waiting for his return. Finally, he gives another spin to what he sees in his mind's eye, wondering *how could she know* (*zheng zhi wo*) (but she should!) that exactly at that moment, from the balcony on his side, he is also facing the same eastward-moving Yangtze and thinking about her.

Thanks to the colloquial tone of the leading words and the irregular beats they add to the syntax, the flow of the poet's thoughts is carried by a rhythmic and flexible sound pattern. Leading words thus help give a material shape to the structure and order of Liu Yong's poetic presentation. One might feel that his leading words function like stage directions and make the poetic acts and situations explicitly clear, perhaps too clear. However, Liu seems to have found a way to make his plainness sophisticated. In the poem, his presentation is linear yet by no

means flat. With the help of the leading words, it explores time and space, involves things far and near, part and whole; it weaves what is outside with what is inside, and even shifts between here and there, this and other. The reflective twist and turn in the latter half of the second stanza is extremely clever: there is only one Yangtze River, but there are two balconies.

In his studies of the contributions of the song lyric to the formal evolution of Chinese poetry, Yu-kung Kao has highlighted some basic differences between the generic formal features of the regulated verse and of the song lyric. According to Kao, in the regulated verse, the poetic self is the source as well as the content of the poetic process.<sup>2</sup> The single vision of the “lyrical self” at the “lyrical moment” of here and now shapes the poetic act, which takes the form of a four-couplet structure. A poet often uses the opening couplet to introduce the poetic situation, the two couplets in the middle to present the direct and immediate impressions from his observation of things and events, and the concluding couplet to reveal the inner state of the lyrical self.

The case is different with the song lyric. The basic structural unit of the song lyric, especially in its more sophisticated *manci* form, is not the couplet but the strophe.<sup>3</sup> What the strophe is to the song lyric is comparable to what the couplet is to the regulated verse. A strophe consists of an indefinite number of lines that share a center of focus.<sup>4</sup> Such a strophic unit can therefore be called a concentricity. As each line in this unit can describe things or narrate events “from a different angle or at a different point in time, involving various kinds of mental activities in addition to sense impressions, the structure can also be called one of ‘stratification.’”<sup>5</sup> This structure of concentricity and stratification works at more than one level. While each strophic unit has its own center, all the units within a song lyric have a common center at a higher level. In this way, the whole song lyric is sustained by an “incremental structure.”<sup>6</sup>

Looking again at Liu Yong’s lyric, we can see this incremental structure at work. The four steps in the poet’s presentation of autumn in the first stanza and the four segments in the second (altogether eight beats as the tune title indicates) are all strophic units. Each of them captures a particular moment in a series of poetic events, representing one stage in the development of the theme. Working as a whole, and with the help of the stanzaic division, they allow the poet to unfold his description of scenery and narration of inner activities step by step. It is fair to say that Liu Yong’s creative use of leading words in the *manci* marked the

beginning of the literati *ci* poets' conscious experiment on the multifaceted structure; such utilization of leading words eventually became the most important aesthetic feature of the genre.

Just as Liu Yong introduced exciting innovations to the techniques of the *manci*, Su Shi expanded its thematic scope. Su Shi's *manci* lyrics prove that the *ci* could be skillfully used to express sentiments that were generally thought to be suitable only for **shi** poetry.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the formal properties of the *manci* provided him with powerful poetic devices that could be used to convey personal feelings and emotions that were too intense and too exquisite to be fully expressed in *shi* poetry.<sup>8</sup> As a result, not only did he further expand the subject matter of *manci*, but he also gave many of his songs a genuine personal voice, an unambiguous autobiographical tone as found in traditional *shi* poetry.<sup>9</sup> He was sometimes accused of ignoring the intrinsic musicality of the *ci*, but, at his best, the spontaneous flow of his thoughts and feelings unfold with a natural ease and fit comfortably the syntax and the phonetic modules of the *manci* tunes, which had developed from the sound patterns that Liu Yong had discerned in the performances of the popular musicians and singers half a century before.

### C13.2

#### To the Tune "Prelude to the River Tune"

On the night of the Mid-Autumn Festival of *bingchen* [1076], I enjoyed drinking until dawn—I got completely drunk. This piece was composed for the occasion and also to express my thoughts for my brother Ziyu.

- For how long has the bright moon been there?
- 2 I hold up the wine cup and ask the blue sky.  
I wonder in the palaces in heaven
- 4 What year tonight is.  
I wish to ride the wind and return there,
- 6 But fear the crystal towers and jade galleries  
So high up there would be too cold for me.
- 8 I rise to dance with my solitary clear shadow,  
How does this compare to the human world!



- 10 Going round the crimson hall,  
Creeping in through the decorated doorway
- 12 It shines on the sleepless me.  
I should not owe it any grudge
- 14 Then why would it always turn full when we are separated?  
Men are sad now, joyous then, because of parting and reunion;
- 16 Moon cannot but wane and wax, wax and wane.  
Things can never be perfect.
- 18 I only hope we will both live long,  
And, while a thousand miles apart, share the same moon's beauty.
- [QSC 1:280]

							水調歌頭	(shuǐ tiào gē tóu)
bright	moon	how many	time	have			明月幾時有	(míng yuè jǐ shí yǒu)
hold	wine	ask	blue	sky			把酒問青天 Δ	(bǎ jiǔ wèn qīng tiān)
not	know	heaven	up	palace	terrace		不知天上宮闕	(bù zhī tiān shàng gōng què)
today	night	be	what	year			今夕是何年 Δ	(jīn xī shì hé nián)
I	desire	ride	wind	return	go		我欲乘風歸去 ▲	(wǒ yù chéng fēng guī qù)
again	afraid	jade	building	jade	house		又恐瓊樓玉宇	(yòu kǒng qióng lóu yù yǔ)
high	place	not	stand	cold			高處不勝寒 Δ	(gāo chù bú shèng hán)
rise	dance	tease	clear	shadow			起舞弄清影	(qǐ wǔ nòng qīng yǐng)
how	like	in	human	space			何似在人間 Δ	(hé sì zài rén jiān)
							轉朱閣	(zhuǎn zhū gé)
circle	crimson	cabinet					低綺戶	(dī qǐ hù)
lower	beautiful	door					照無眠 Δ	(zhào wú mián)
shine	without	sleep					不應有恨	(bù yīng yǒu hèn)
not	should	have	grudge			what	何事長向別時圓 Δ	(hé shì cháng xiàng bié shí yuán)
what	thing	always	toward	part	time		round	人有悲歡離合
human	have	sorrow	joy	leave	union		月有陰晴圓缺	(yuè yǒu yīn qīng yuán quē)
moon	have	cloudy	sunny	wax	wane		此事古難全 Δ	(cǐ shì gǔ nán quán)
this	thing	ancient	difficult	perfect			但願人長久	(dàn yuàn rén cháng jiǔ)
but	wish	people	long	long			千里共嬋娟 Δ	(qiān lǐ gòng chán juān)
thousand	mile	share	moon	goddess				

The first thing of note in this poem is its opening comments, which tie the song to a specific occasion and lend it a genuine personal voice. Su Shi was the first to introduce this common practice of classical poetry into the writing of a song lyric.

When he wrote this piece, Su Shi no doubt had in mind a poem by the great Tang poet **Li Bai** (701–762), “Questioning the Moon with Wine Cup

in Hand.” Commentators have also pointed out the link between Su Shi’s opening question and the “Questions for Heaven” (Tian wen) posed by **Qu Yuan** (340?–278 B.C.E.) more than a thousand years earlier. The echo across history adds an extra dimension to the existential quest in this song: a millennium of earnest human search in the face of the indifference of eternity. The awe and puzzlement felt by the poet is carried not so much by the question itself as by the yearning posture of one individual in the middle of the night facing the infinite openness of the sky, wishing to reach to the bottom of the cosmic truth.

The tension created at the very beginning between inquisitive humankind and the mysterious universe continues in the interaction between the poet and the moon. The moon of mid-autumn is generally believed to be the brightest of the year, and on that night it has such a great allure for the poet that he hopes to “return” to it (line 5), as though his origin were in the otherworldliness of that heavenly body. (The Daoist implication is detectable in the wind-riding image borrowed from two Daoist texts, the *Zhuangzi* and the *Liezi*.) However, he instantly hesitates, fearing that the palaces high up there might be too cold for him (lines 6–7). His uncertainty about where he belongs is expressed in the ambiguity of the last two lines of the first stanza. When he dances with his own shadow in a half-drunken state under the ethereal moonlight, he feels suspended above the human world; hence his uttered question “How does this compare to the human world!” (line 9). But a totally different reading is also possible: he gives up his thoughts of flying to the moon and finds satisfaction in pleasing himself on earth: How can anything compare with this human world? The ambiguity seems to be deliberate; it suggests the mumbling of someone who is completely drunk and fits the pattern of the poet’s oscillating thinking that we have seen so far.

The communication between the poet and the moon is actually a one-man show. The poet thinks out loud, reasoning with himself, yet he stages his monologue in a dramatic situation in which he reaches out to the moon and tries to engage it in a dialogue. The fact that the moon appears to be a reluctant interlocutor only adds to the dramatic effect. Its silence prompts further questions, reflections, and doubts from the poet and gives him an excuse to continue his philosophical rambling. This small drama continues in the second stanza. While what really happens is that the sleepless poet watches the moon and follows its slow movement (lines 10–12), he describes the situation in such a way that it

appears as though the moon has come to disturb him and caused his sleeplessness. Instead of admitting his oversensitivity to the subtle changes in nature, the poet accuses the moon of always making him feel the pain of separation (lines 13–14). Then he changes his mind. He forgives the moon and uses the occasion to theorize his new understanding of the inevitability of the human situation (lines 15–16). The originally pensive mood changes. The song ends on a positive, even optimistic note.

This second song lyric by Su Shi is a good example of how the poet adapted the conventional subjects of classical poetry to the *manci* form:

### **C13.3**

#### **To the Tune “The Charm of Niannu”: Meditation on the Past at Red Cliff**

- The Great Yangtze runs east,  
2 Its waves have swept away heroes of past ages.  
Lying to the west of the old fort, it is said,  
4 Is the Red Cliff, known because of Zhou Yu of the Three Kingdoms.  
Rugged stone walls pierce the sky.  
6 Angry waves beat the banks,  
Churning up water like piles of frosty snow.  
8 The mountains and the River look like a painting,  
And how many heroes were once here!
- 10 Thinking far back, I see Zhou Gongjin,  
With Little Qiao as his new bride,  
12 Beaming with valor.  
He has feather fan in hand and is in silk headdress, and while  
chatting merrily,  
14 The powerful enemy vanishes in flying ash and smoke.  
My mind wandering over the old kingdom,  
16 I become so sentimental that one may well laugh at me:  
Too early have gray hairs crept onto my head.  
18 Life is like a dream,  
So let me offer this cup to the moon over the river.

								念奴嬌 赤壁懷古 (niàn nú jiāo chì bì huái gǔ)
great	river	east	go					大江東去 (dà jiāng dōng qù)
wave	wash	exhaust	thousand	ancient	wind	flow	human thing	浪淘盡、千古風流人物 ▲ (làng táo jìn qiān gǔ fēng liú rén wù)
old	fort	west	side	people	say	is		故壘西邊人道是 (gù lěi xī biān rén dào shì)
Three	Kingdom	Zhou	Master	Red	Cliff	三國周郎赤壁 ▲ (sān guó zhōu láng chì bì)		
chaotic	rock	pierce	sky					亂石穿空 (luàn shí chuān kōng)
startled	wave	beat	bank					驚濤拍岸 (jīng tāo pāi àn)
roll	up	thousand	pile	snow				捲起千堆雪 ▲ (juǎn qǐ qiān duī xuě)
river	mountain	like	painting					江山如畫 (jiāng shān rú huà)
one	time	more	less	bold	outstanding	一時多少豪傑 ▲ (yì shí duō shǎo háo jié)		
distant	think	Gong-	jīn	that	year	遙想公瑾當年 (yáo xiǎng gōng jīn dāng nián)		
Little	Qiao	just	married	done				小喬初嫁了 (xiǎo qiáo chū jià liǎo)
masculine	posture	flower	shine					雄姿英發 ▲ (xióng zī yīng fà)
feather	fan	silk	scarf	chat	laugh	between		羽扇綸巾談笑間 (yǔ shàn lún jīn tán xiào jiān)
strong	enemy	ash	fly	smoke	extinguished	強虜灰飛煙滅 ▲ (qiáng lǔ huī fēi yān miè)		
old	country	spirit	travel					故國神遊 (gù guó shén yóu)
much	emotion	should	laugh					多情應笑 (duō qíng yīng xiào)
I	early	grow	white	hair				我早生華髮 ▲ (wǒ zǎo shēng huá fà)
human	space	like	dream					人間如夢 (rén jiān rú mèng)
one	cup	return	libation	river	moon	一尊還酹江月 ▲ (yì zūn huán lèi jiāng yuè)		

The poet wrote this meditation on the past when he came to an ancient site on the banks of the Yangtze thought by many to be Red Cliff, where a formidable fleet led by **Cao Cao** (155–220) from the kingdom of Wei was wiped out in 208 by Zhou Yu (Zhou Gongjin, 175–210), the commander of the army of the kingdom of Wu. The decisive battle

prevented Wei from annexing Wu and another kingdom, Shu, and ushered in the Three Kingdoms period (220–280).

The song begins with a sigh: even those heroic figures could not avoid being swept away by the eastward-flowing Yangtze! The theme of *ubi sunt* is expressed through the poem's images. Compared with the awe-inspiring "painting" (line 8) of nature in the first stanza, human existence appears ephemeral and human efforts insignificant. The "rugged" cliffs and "angry waves" of the great river are as real and threatening as they appear immediately before the poet's eyes (lines 5–7), while heroes of past ages have been reduced by time to insubstantial hearsay—"it is said" (line 3)—nowhere to be seen. The conclusion of the first stanza has a ring of both irony and sentimentality. Where are those heroes who "once" (line 9) competed with each other here for the control of the mountains and the Yangtze River?

In the second stanza, in his spiritual wandering over the "old kingdom" (line 15), the poet sees General Zhou Yu, one of those heroes. It is interesting to note that although Zhou Yu was a warrior "beaming with valor" (line 12), who made his enemies vanish in "ash and smoke" (line 14), he is also depicted as a scholar, with a "feather fan" and "silk headdress" (line 13). The mention of his newlywed and legendarily beautiful wife reveals his own youthful charm, and his graceful composure in the face of an overwhelming enemy shows his mental and intellectual capability rather than his military prowess. Many traditional commentators and modern scholars have expressed the belief that the poet nostalgically projects himself—a scholar—into the image of Zhou Yu. This reading makes sense when one considers that autobiographical reflection brought forth by a meditation on history is one of the important elements of a poem of this type. Internal evidence from the song itself, however, supports a different interpretation. The gentler, intellectual side of the image of the young general, in contrast with the image of nature depicted as "rugged" and "angry" in the first stanza, foregrounds the vulnerability of humankind. Human life is beautiful yet evanescent, created only to be swept away. The juxtaposition of the young general so vividly called forth in the poet's reflections of the ancient hero, long dead, with the living yet rapidly decaying gray-haired poet lamenting the past (line 17) expresses the poet's perplexity over the inscrutable and devastating power of time. Indeed, the almost perfect image of the young general—whose link with the present is barely maintained in such terms as "it is said" and "once"—is an illusion embedded in a distant time frame.

As the poet tells us, in order to see his hero, he has to think “far back” (line 10) into the past. Not unexpectedly, the poet ends his spiritual journey with the melancholy sigh that life is but a dream (line 18) and offers his “cup to the moon over the river” (line 19). In Chinese, the phrase can also be read as “the moon’s reflection in the river,” symbolizing the illusoriness and intangibility of human existence.

The next *ci* poet to be discussed is Li Qingzhao, one of the most prominent female figures in the history of Chinese poetry. Her sensitive heart, keen eye, and musical ear lend her *manci* works an unusual psychological depth:

#### **C13.4**

##### **To the Tune “One Beat Followed by Another, a Long Tune”**

- Searching and searching, seeking and seeking,  
2 Chilly and cold, quiet and desolate,  
Sad, sorrowful, miserable.  
4 This time of year when it’s warm now, soon cold again,  
I just cannot take care of myself.  
6 Two or three cups of bland wine  
Are not enough to resist the rushing evening wind.  
8 The wild geese passing by  
Break my heart,  
10 And they are none other than my old acquaintances!  
  
In piles chrysanthemums are everywhere.  
12 Withered and damaged;  
Now who will pick them?  
14 I cling to the window;  
All alone, what am I going to do before it gets dark?  
16 The drizzle on the *wutong* leaves  
Drips and drops, drops and drips into evening.  
18 How can all this  
Be summed up by one word, “sorrow”?

[QSC 2:932]

							聲聲慢 (shēng shēng màn)
search	search	seek	seek				尋尋覓覓 ▲ (xún xún mì mì)
cold	cold	clear	clear				冷冷清清 (lěng lěng qīng qīng)
miserable	miserable	sad	sad	sorrowful	sorrowful		悽悽慘慘戚戚 ▲ (qī qī cǎn cǎn qī qī)
sudden	warm	soon	cold	time	season		乍暖還寒時候 (zhà nuǎn huán hán shí hòu)
most	difficult	maintain	rest				最難將息 ▲ (zuì nán jiāng xī)
three	cup	two	cup	bland	wine		三杯兩盞淡酒 (sān bēi liǎng zhǎn dàn jiǔ)
how	resist	it	evening	come	wind	rapid	怎敵他晚來風急 ▲ (zěn dí tā wǎn lái fēng jí)
geese	pass	[particle]					雁過也 (yàn guò yě)
right	hurt	heart					正傷心 (zhèng shāng xīn)
but	be	old	time	mutual	acquaintance		卻是舊時相識 ▲ (què shì jiù shí xiāng shí)
full	ground	yellow	flower	pile	cumulate		滿地黃花堆積 ▲ (mǎn dì huáng huā duī jī)
thin	pallid	damaged					憔悴損 (qiáo cuī sǔn)
like	now	have	who	stand	pick		如今有誰堪摘 ▲ (rú jīn yǒu shéi kān zhāi)
guard	[particle]	window	[particle]				守著窗兒 (shǒu zhe chuāng·r)
solitude	self	how	live	obtain	dark		獨自怎生得黑 ▲ (dú zì zěn shēng dé hēi)
wu-	tong	further	concurrently	small	rain		梧桐更兼細雨 (wú tóng gèng jiān xì yǔ)
till	yellow	dusk	drop	drop	drip	drip	到黃昏、點點滴滴 ▲ (dào huáng hūn diǎn diǎn dī dī)
this	order	sequence					這次第 (zhè cì dì)

how      one      [measure]      sorrow      word      finish      obtain      怎一箇愁字了得 ▲  
(zěn yí gè chóu zì liǎo dé)

The tune title of this piece (“Shengsheng man”) tells part of the story—a *manci* with doubled sounds. The poem is best known for its beginning. Readers need only look at the transliteration and word-for-word translation to experience the expressiveness of the fourteen doubled dental and labiodental sounds. The two verbs in line 1 are synonyms, as are the two adjectives in line 2 and the three in line 3. The repeated words form a three-line enjambment of sounds charged with meaning. The repetition of “searching” and “seeking” (line 1) not only prolongs the action but also implies its futility. The poet finds nothing but coldness and loneliness hemming her in (line 2). This brings in endless sorrow, reiterated six times in a triple doublet structure in line 3.

The fourteen syllables in the first three lines summarize the situation the poet finds herself in and foretells what follows in the poem. No matter what she does, she cannot escape from sorrow. She tries to repel the autumn wind (line 6), but she knows that her effort is futile (line 7). The wine is not strong enough to resist the autumn chill, nor can it help her forget her sorrow. Inaction also proves ineffective in driving away sorrow: “wild geese” fly overhead (line 8). Wild geese, long acting as messengers between loved ones and friends in Chinese literature, here serve only to make the poet painfully realize that their service is no longer needed (it is generally believed that this song was written after the poet’s husband died in 1127). Her recognition of the flock as “old acquaintances” intensifies the pain (lines 9–10). Their reappearance brings back memories of people and events from her past and brings to her attention the cyclic change of the seasons. Her heart breaks.

The second stanza continues the motif of the seasonal changes. Like the wild geese, the withering chrysanthemums remind the poet once again that this is the time when everything decays (lines 11–13). In the damaged flowers she sees herself. She is no longer in her prime, and what remains of her life will be wasted in solitude. There seems nothing else for her to do but to just “cling to the window” (line 14). In fact, this appears to be what she has been doing all day long: with a cup in her hand, she sits listlessly there, allowing the passing wild geese and the dying flowers outside the window to torture her heart. Her fear and despair express themselves fully in the exclamation in line 15: How can she drag out the day like this? Behind this exclamation is not ennui but a



dread of the life she is living. She is so afraid of the futility of her searching and seeking and all that meets her eye that she cannot wait for the night, the darkness, to come. But even she herself knows that darkness will not bring her solace. The autumn rain on the *wutong* leaves has been falling all afternoon and promises to extend into the night (lines 16–17). The dripping and dropping of the rain—mimicked by the four onomatopoeic syllables beginning with a “d” sound—like that of tears, echoes the sound repetition of the beginning of the song, suggesting that the sorrowful sigh that opens the song does not stop but goes on all the way through to the end.

The whole piece can be summed up by one word, “sorrow.” As we have seen, the poet emphasizes this at the beginning by repeating the idea of sorrow six times in line 3. Now, at the end of the song, she tells us that the word “sorrow” just cannot express what she has tried so hard to say. Suddenly the poet sounds like Zhuangzi (ca. 369–286 B.C.E.), the language skeptic who wished that he could “have a word” with someone “who had forgotten words.”<sup>10</sup> However, the poet has also inherited Zhuangzi’s dilemma. She has no other medium but language, ironically, even when she wishes that her readers would bypass language. Her best hope is that some kind of unmediated grasp of her sentiment can be achieved by those readers who are willing to go beyond language and try to experience what her words attempt to convey. Seen in this light, her unconventional use of sounds at the beginning of the song can be read as a direct appeal to readers’ sensual, rather than simply intellectual, perception.

The last *ci* master we consider here is Xin Qiji, the most prolific *ci* writer in the Song dynasty. Together with Su Shi, Xin Qiji has been labeled as a representative of the school of “heroic abandon” (*haofang*), as opposed to that of “delicate and restrained” (*wanyue*). But his art defies such an oversimplified categorization. This first poem no doubt reveals his heroic side, yet the style of the second is hard to pin down if mention of “delicate restraint” is forbidden:

### C13.5

#### To the Tune “Congratulating the Bridegroom”

I have composed songs to the tune of “Hexinlang” for all the gardens and pavilions in my district. One day when I was sitting by myself at the Halting Cloud Pavilion, the gurgling streams and green

mountains vied with one another to please me. Presuming that they also wanted me to write something for them, I put down a few lines. They might bear some resemblance to Tao Yuanming's poem "Halting Clouds," in which he expresses his longing for his friends.

Too much I have decayed!

- 2 Alas, all my life I've seen friends and companions fade away,  
And now how many of them are left?
- 4 With gray hair hanging in vain three thousand *zhang* long,  
I laugh away all worldly things.
- 6 Is there anything left, you ask, that might cheer me up?  
I see in green mountains such alluring charm;
- 8 I expect that they see the same in me,  
For in heart and in appearance
- 10 We are a bit similar.

- Goblet in hand, scratching my head by the east window,
- 12 I presume that Tao Yuanming, having finished his poem "Halting  
Clouds,"  
Was in the same mood now I am.
- 14 Those on the south side of the Yangtze who got drunk only to seek  
fame,  
How could they know the magic of the turbid wine?
- 16 Looking back, I conjure a gust of wind and send clouds flying.  
I regret not that I can't meet the ancients,
- 18 But that the ancients had no chance to see my wildness.  
The number of people who understand me
- 20 Is no more than two or three.

[QSC 3:1915]

							賀新郎 (hè xīn láng)
much	oh	I	decay	oh			甚矣吾衰矣 ▲ (shèn yǐ wú shuāi yǐ)
sorry	level	life	associate	travel	wither	fall	恨平生、交游零落 (chàng píng shēng jiāo yóu líng luò)
only	now	remain	how many				只今餘幾 ▲ (zhī jīn yú jǐ)
white	hair	vainly	hang	three	thousand	zhang	白髮空垂三千丈 (bái fà kōng chuí sān qiān zhàng)
one	laugh	human	space	ten thousand	thing	一笑人間萬事 ▲ (yī xiào rén jiān wàn shì)	
ask	what	thing	may	make	sir	happy	問何物、能令公喜 ▲ (wèn hé wù néng lìng gōng xǐ)
I	see	green	mountain	so	lovely	charming	我見青山多嫵媚 (wǒ jiàn qīng shān duō wǔ mèi)
expect	green	mountain	see	me	should	like	this 料青山、見我應如是 ▲ (liào qīng shān jiàn wǒ yīng rú shì)
emotion	and	appearance					情與貌 (qíng yǔ mào)
somewhat	mutual	like					略相似 ▲ (luè xiāng sì)
one	cup	scratch	head	east	window	inside	一尊搔首東窗裡 ▲ (yī zūn sāo shǒu dōng chuāng lǐ)
imagine	Yuan-	ming	Halting	Cloud	poem	finished	想瀾明、停雲詩就 (xiǎng yuān míng tíng yún shī jiù)
this	moment	wind	taste				此時風味 ▲ (cǐ shí fēng wèi)
river	left	indulge	drunk	seek	fame	people	江左沉酣求名者 (jiāng zuǒ chén hān qiú míng zhě)
how	know	turbid	wine	wonderful	reason	豈識濁醪妙理 ▲ (qǐ shí zhuó láo miào lǐ)	
turn	head	summon	cloud	fly	rise	回首叫、雲飛風起 ▲ (huí shǒu jiào yún fēi fēng qǐ)	
not	regret	ancient	people	I	not	see	不恨古人吾不見 (bú hèn gǔ rén wú bú jiàn)
regret	ancient	people	not	see	me	wild	only 恨古人、不見吾狂耳 ▲ (hèn gǔ rén bú jiàn wú kuáng ěr)
know	me	people					知我者 (zhī wǒ zhě)
two	three	men					二三子 ▲ (èr sān zǐ)

The poet's arrogant reference to the "ancients" in lines 17 and 18, close to the end of the song, is a clever adaptation of an earlier text. As recorded in the *Nanshi* (*History of the Southern Dynasties*), Zhang Rong (444–497), a literary prodigy of the Southern Dynasties (420–589), once bemoaned that he had been born too late to compete with the ancients: "I regret not that I can't meet the ancients; what I regret is that the ancients

had no chance to meet me.” Now, seven hundred years later, when Zhang Rong himself had become an “ancient,” Xin Qiji has appropriated his voice. The only word he added in recasting the earlier text was *kuang* (wildness, arrogance). Obviously, he believed that his most valuable asset was being wild and arrogant, and his wish was that his wild quality be fully appreciated. But what does this wildness really mean?

A casual reading of the song shows that the poet is saddened by his own aging and the passing away of his friends, and yet, in mocking his long gray hair, he accepts his lot with a sense of humor. He finds solace in nature and, of course, knows the true taste of wine. Judging from these stock poetic gestures, it seems that what the poet celebrates is the wildness of a hermit.

The poet is not, however, a hermit. He is not another **Tao Qian** (Tao Yuanming, 365?–427), the well-known recluse-poet ([chap. 6](#)) to whom Xin Qiji likens himself in the second stanza. The assumed philosophical calmness can hardly conceal the struggle of a restless spirit, which is wild in a totally different sense of the word. Even early in the song, in the first stanza, where the “I” makes every effort to take things lightly and express himself calmly, one can sense the conflict between his superficial composure and his suppressed wild spirit. For example, after declaring that he can dismiss all “worldly things” with a laugh (line 5), the poet asks himself the rhetorical question whether there is anything left that might make him happy (line 6). The answer is yes. The “alluring charm” of the “green mountains” greatly pleases him (line 7), and he “expects” that he would be very charming in the eyes of the charming mountains (line 8). One should note that this is not a simple case of “pathetic fallacy.” The poet puts in the mouth of the green mountains a eulogy on himself and makes them a medium through which his ego finds self-gratifying confirmation. It thus becomes clear that the “worldly things” that the poet wants to “laugh away” do not mean only worldly concerns but also all the mediocrity of the world. It is his contemptuous dismissal of the mediocre world that brings about the question: (Since you think nothing is worth mentioning in this world) “is there *anything left* ... that might cheer” your heart? As we have seen, the poet begins by posing himself as a modest noncontender. He laments how much he has declined, claims that he is aloof from the world of fame and gain, and seeks solace in nature, as would a hermit. After listening to him more carefully, we find that each of his statements carries an overtone suggesting that he is far apart from the common herd.

The tension between the serene surface and the undercurrent of agitation continues in the second stanza. The image presented in lines 11–13 is taken from Tao Qian's poem "Halting Clouds": a lonely drinker, eager for his friend to come, scratches his head restlessly, just as that anxious lover in the *Shijing* (*The Book of Poetry*) does when waiting for his fair lass. With this image, the poet again assumes the air of a hermit and implies his longing for a true friend who understands him.

It is interesting to note that although this key image is borrowed from Tao Qian, the poet unabashedly takes it as his own. He does not want to say that it is he who resembles Tao Qian; instead, he "presumes" that Tao Qian would be in the same mood as he is now. This self-centered stance is not unlike that in the first stanza when he commandingly "expects" that the green mountains should consider him charming. He thus makes the "ancient" Tao Qian come to see him. He really wants to be admired in this way, for the "special flavor" he now "relishes" (the literal meaning of *cishi fengwei* [line 13]) is the thrill of being an elitist solitary drinker. The use of the phrase *cishi fengwei* shows how dearly he treasures this special moment: he wants to prolong and savor every bit of it.

This is also why, in lines 14 and 15, he snorts with contempt at "those on the south side of the Yangtze who got drunk only to seek fame." The similar political and military situation of Tao Qian's time and that of the Southern Song allows the poet to hint that those seekers of fame on the southern bank of the river also include his despicable contemporaries. What he really despises in them is not so much their craving for fame as their being undeserving of what they crave. "How could they know the magic of the turbid wine?" asks the vehement poet (line 16). For him, they have no right to pretend that they know the special flavor of being wild.

The irony is that while the poet jeers at those seekers of fame, he himself is one who grudgingly guards against potential sharers of the honor and fame that he gives himself. As if to manifest how different he is from the mediocre, he abruptly makes a high-flown gesture that has nothing to do with being a hermit: he threatens to "conjure a gust of wind and send clouds flying" (line 16), alluding to "**Dafeng ge**" (Song of the Great Wind), by the first Han emperor, **Han Gaozu** (Liu Bang, 256–195 B.C.E.), which is said to have been written during his ostentatious homecoming after having donned the emperor's dragon robe.

What follows then is the stunning outcry, "I regret not that I can't meet

the ancients, / But that the ancients had no chance to see my wildness” (lines 17–18). The “ancients” become pitiable because they do not have the chance to see the poet’s “wildness”—his aggressive egotism. It is they, not he, who suffer a loss. When he ends the song with “The number of people who understand me / Is no more than two or three” (lines 19–20), the poet is not repeating his earlier lament that most of his friends have faded away; the two lines allude, rather, to a passage in the *Analects* where Confucius sighs, “No one knows me” (14:37), yet the poet changes it into a delightful exclamation of sudden enlightenment. The reason that only two or three understand him is that few people are on a par with him: he stands alone in this world, peerless.

The force of the poet’s sudden outburst of self-pride is enforced by the rhythmic tone of his utterance. To write in the *ci* form is to “fill in words” in the existing tune patterns. In this sense, a *ci* poet does not enjoy too much freedom. But Xin Qiji knows how to make the best of the existing tune patterns. He ignores, for example, the pause within line 18 dictated by the meter in order to allow his wild exclamation, which starts in line 17, to rush on almost without stop in a sequence of fifteen syllables. When this forward movement is abruptly halted and the whole piece brought to an end by the two brisk three-syllable lines, we cannot but feel the tension resulting from the sudden halt of this onward force and from the confidence and certainty carried by these terse closing lines.

If the song lyric examined in the preceding poem exemplifies Xin Qiji’s heroic style, the following one demonstrates that he was also capable of a very different kind of poetic voice, one marked by delicacy and restraint:

### C13.6

#### To the Tune “Groping for Fish”

In the sixth year of *chunxi* [1179], I was transferred from the post of assistant fiscal intendant of Hubei to that of Hunan. This song was written at the farewell party given by my colleague Wang Zhengzhi at the Small Hill Pavilion.

- How many more winds and rains can it withstand?  
2 In such a hurry, again spring is leaving.  
So dear I hold vernal times that I have always been afraid that  
flowers would bloom too soon,

- 4 And how can I bear to see countless fallen petals?  
Spring, just stay for a while longer.
- 6 It is said that fragrant grasses have spread over the end of the earth  
and blocked your way home.  
Why didn't you say a word?
- 8 I only see the spider's enticing webs,  
Under painted eaves,
- 10 All day long, flirt with flying catkins.
- What a story about the Tall Gate Palace!
- 12 Another carefully planned reunion is upset.  
Charming beauty did invite jealousy.
- 14 Even if a beautifully worded letter can be procured with gold,  
To whom can I deliver this tender heart?
- 16 You, do not dance!  
Have you not seen how those favored beauties fall to dust?
- 18 The bitterest is lonely grief.  
So do not lean against the high balustrade,
- 20 For it is there that the sun goes down  
Amid the heartbreaking misty willows.

[QSC 3:1867]

again can stand how many round wind rain

hastily hastily spring again return go

cherish spring always regret flower blossom early

how case fallen red without count

spring just stop

see say speak heaven edge fragrant grass lose return road

complain spring not talk

judge only have eager diligent

painted eaves spider web

all day provoke flying catkin

Long Gate event

accurately planned good date again missed

moth eyebrow once have people envy

thousand gold even if buy Xiang- ru rhapsody

amorously lovingly this emotion whom tell

sir don't dance

sir not see Yu- huan Fei- yan all dust dirt

leisure sorrow most bitter

don't go lean high tower

slanting sun right in

misty willow broken intestinal place

摸魚兒  
(mō yú-er)

更能消、幾番風雨 ▲  
(gèng néng xiāo jǐ fān fēng yǔ)  
匆匆春又歸去 ▲  
(cōng cōng chūn yòu guī qù)  
惜春長恨花開早  
(xī chūn cháng hèn huā kāi zǎo)  
何況落紅無數 ▲  
(hé kuàng luò hóng wú shù)  
春且住 ▲  
(chūn qiě zhù)  
見說道、天涯芳草迷歸路 ▲  
(jiàn shuō dào tiān yá fāng cǎo mí guī lù)  
怨春不語 ▲  
(yuàn chūn bù yǔ)  
算只有殷勤  
(suàn zhǐ yǒu yīn qín)  
畫著蛛網  
(huà zhuó zhū wǎng)  
盡日惹飛絮 ▲  
(jìn rì rě fēi xù)  
長門事  
(cháng mén shì)  
準擬佳期又誤 ▲  
(zhǔn nǐ jiā qī yòu wù)  
蛾眉曾有人妒 ▲  
(é méi céng yǒu rén dù)  
千金縱買相如賦  
(qiān jīn zòng mǎi xiāng rú fù)<sup>11</sup>  
脈脈此情誰訴 ▲  
(mò mò cǐ qíng shéi sù)  
君莫舞 ▲  
(jūn mò wǔ)  
君不見、玉環飛燕皆塵土 ▲  
(jūn bú jiàn yù huán fēi yàn jiē chén tǔ)  
閒愁最苦 ▲  
(xián chóu zuì kǔ)  
休去倚危樓  
(xiū qù yǐ wēi lóu)  
斜陽正在  
(xié yáng zhèng zài)  
煙柳斷腸處 ▲  
(yān liǔ duàn cháng chù)

In this song, the persona laments, through a female voice, the passing away of spring and the wasting of the spring of her life. But even a casual reading reveals that this is allegorical poetry. The true reason for the persona's fret is found in line 13: "Charming beauty did invite jealousy."



Judging from the information provided in the prefatory comments, it is probable that the composition of the song was prompted by the poet's reflection on certain unpleasant experiences in his political life.

The song begins with the persona voicing her worry about the inevitable—that spring is “again” (*you*) going away (line 2). The phrase “how many more” (line 1)—expressed by *geng* (still, even more) and *jifan* (several times) in the original—indicates that the persona has been watching closely the coming and going of the “winds and rains” and is deeply troubled by their devastating effects on the delicate spring. She has “always [*chang*] been afraid that flowers would bloom” too early and fall too soon (line 3). No doubt the “countless fallen petals” on the ground are too much for her (line 4).

She pleads with spring to stay, employing her persistent, although poorly argued persuasion (lines 5–7). The tone of her voice is not demanding, merely entreating. The uncertainty and hesitation of her voice are suggested by the qualifying tone of the word *qie* (just, why not) (line 5) and the phrase *jian shuo dao* (it is said) (line 6). The stupidity of her attempt to talk spring into coming back and her grumbling that spring gives her no response tell us not only how distraught but also how guileless she is. The image of a fair lady with a delicate heart is instantly established. The series of well-conceived time-measurement words and phrases—*you*, *geng*, *jifan*, *chang*, and others—vividly portray a feminine subject extremely susceptible to outside stimuli. The three verbs related to this tender and sensitive subjectivity—*xi* (to hold dear, pity), *hen* (to regret), and *yuan* (to complain)—are all tinged with emotional fragility.

As her monologue continues in the second stanza, the fair lady divulges the secret of her sorrow by alluding to a story about a royal consort of Emperor Wu of the Han (r. 140–87 B.C.E.) who managed to regain her lord's favor by asking the best-known literary talent of the day to write on her behalf a moving rhyme-prose to the emperor. Here, however, the poet has changed the consort's success story into a tragedy: the long-cherished hope of the miserable consort to regain the favor of her lord is dashed by the slander from her jealous rivals. How deep her disappointment and how keen her heart's pains are can be read from the carefully chosen words *zhunni* (well planned) and another *you* (again, once more) (line 12). Such careful planning and breathtaking anticipation are frustrated once again, and despair ensues. She seems to suggest that she would rather give up, since, even if she could have a moving letter written, there seems no way for her to find its recipient. Her

heart, so tender, has no one to pour (*su*) itself out to (line 15).

The tender female voice speaks throughout (or almost throughout) the song. The disquieting late-spring scene—fallen petals, spiders' webs under eaves, setting sun—is seen through the sensitive female eye. The allusion that links the two parts of the song lyric delineates the distress of a tender heart wounded by neglect. All these elements seem to work together to sustain a coherent story line.

The almost flawless story line of the song and the consistent voice scheme are disrupted, however, by the discordance created by the middle segment of the second stanza (lines 16–17). The segment consists of an imperative (line 16) and a negative interrogative (line 17). Both are bluntly directed at a second person, a *jun* (you or sir). Usually used as a form of polite, honorific address, *jun* here functions specifically as the target of the poet's contempt and hatred. "Sir," commands the poet, "do not dance!" The contrast between the apparently polite and respectful form of address and the content of this imperative is so great that it not only reveals the poet's anger but also carries a threat. To make sure that the threat is not taken lightly, the poet launches yet another round of attack: "[Sir,] have you not seen how those favored beauties fall to dust?" The emphatic power of the negative interrogative is so forceful and aggressive that it can be taken only as an unforgettable follow-up to the foregoing threat.

If we read this sudden outburst of emotion in context, we see that it could never be expressed by the voice of the fair lady, gentle though sometimes grumbling, with which we have become familiar. Although the persona's tone gets bitter at the beginning of the second stanza, it is still restrained. Her bitterness comes not so much from her hatred of those who envy her as from her regret that there is no way to make her tender feelings known. The word *zong* (even if [line 14]) reveals the helplessness and resignation implied in the rhetorical question in line 15. The lady does not show any sign of anger even at the end of the song. It seems that she prefers to keep all the suffering to herself; sorrow and bitterness are carefully held at the tip of a well-trained tongue.

Then suddenly, a new voice, forceful and aggressive, breaks out from the plane of this story line and claims a new level of meaning of its own. The tension between the two planes has its merits. It is not that it helps bring out the allegorical meaning of the poem, which is already clear enough. Rather, the true self of the poet intrudes into the allegorical process of the song he so carefully presents, and speaks in a different

voice, appealing to his readers with the immediacy and intensity of his message. Here perhaps lies another merit of the juxtaposition of the two planes of meaning. By displaying the evident conflict between the two voices, the poet deliberately shows how hard he tries, although in vain, to restrain his pent-up emotions. The poet's candor is tricky and his naïveté a pretense, because they are part of his design. What is most noticeable in this design is his overdoing of an otherwise well-wrought allegory. The poet cannot wait for the implied meaning to emanate naturally from the metaphor of his story line. Instead, with the sudden outburst of emotion in the middle of the second stanza, he impatiently calls his readers' attention to the message his allegory carries.

Xinda Lian

#### NOTES

1. For a detailed discussion of Liu Yong's use of *lingzi*, see Kang-i Sun Chang, *The Evolution of Chinese Tz'u Poetry: From Late T'ang to Northern Sung* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980), 123–133. See also Shuen-fu Lin, "The Formation of a Distinct Generic Identity for Tz'u," in *Voices of the Song Lyric in China*, ed. Pauline Yu (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 20–21, and Stuart Sargent, "Tz'u," in *The Columbia History of Chinese Literature*, ed. Victor H. Mair (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 319.
2. Kao Yu-kung, "Xiaoling zai shi chuantong zhong de diwei" (The Place of *Xiaoling* Lyrics in the Poetic Tradition), *Cixue* 9 (1992): 17.
3. Shuen-fu Lin was the first to employ this Greek prosodic term, which literally means "act of turning" and hence a division of a poem, to refer to a structural unit in a song lyric (*The Transformation of the Chinese Lyrical Tradition: Chiang K'uei and Southern Sung Tz'u Poetry* [Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978], 106–107).
4. Kao, "Xiaoling," 17.
5. Kao, "Xiaoling," 17.
6. Kao, "Xiaoling," 18–19.
7. Lin, "Formation of a Distinct Generic Identity for Tz'u," 22–24.
8. Ronald C. Egan, *Word, Image, and Deed in the Life of Su Shi*, Harvard-Yenching Studies, vol. 39 (Cambridge, Mass.: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, and Harvard-Yenching Institute, 1994), 326–327.
9. A detailed discussion of this issue can be found in Egan, *Word, Image, and Deed*, 315–317, 322–330.
10. *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), 302.
11. Although the last character of line 14, *fu*, fits into the rhyme, it is not marked as a rhyming character because its position is designated as *ju* (unrhymed) in standard rhyme books.

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## ***Ci* Poetry**

### Long Song Lyrics on Objects (*Yongwu Ci*)

By the end of the Northern Song (960–1127), the *ci*, or song lyric, had evolved from its origin as a popular song in the ninth century to an established genre for literati poets, one fully accepted into the mainstream of the Chinese literary tradition, which viewed poetry essentially as a medium of self-expression. In contrast with *shi* poetry, whose lines are usually of uniform length, the song lyric is usually composed of lines of varying lengths. This irregular shape allows poets to depict the natural and spontaneous processes of human feeling more effectively. Thus since Northern Song times, poets have been using the song lyric to express the more tender and subtle states of feeling and awareness.

The song lyric continued to evolve in significant ways during the Southern Song (1127–1279). The Qing poet and scholar of the song lyric **Zhu Yizun** (1629–1709) once noted that “whenever people talk about the song lyric, they always hold in esteem that of the Northern Song. But only in the Southern Song did it attain [technical] perfection, and only at the end of the Song did it reach the full extent of its transformations. [The song lyrics by] Jiang Kui were most extraordinary [in this evolution].”<sup>1</sup> Like much of traditional Chinese poetry criticism, this comment is cryptic and without detail. Zhu Yizun made an insightful observation on the development of the song lyric during the Southern Song. Whether we agree with his assertion that Jiang Kui (ca. 1155–1221) was the most extraordinary *ci* writer, Zhu Yizun pinpointed him as a poet whose works exemplified the refinement for which the song lyric of the Southern Song became justly famous.

There are many aspects of the late Song poets' development of the song lyric, but two are especially important: the creation of what may be called a spatial design in the poems and the transformation of the direct self-expressive mode heretofore dominant in traditional Chinese poetry. As Kao Yu-kung has pointed out, "In its perfect manifestation, a 'long song lyric' (*manci* or *changdiao ci*) uses the language of symbolization to depict the complex inner state of the poet, and this manifestation was first seen in the Southern Song period."<sup>2</sup> He contrasts the spatial design—spreading many ideas and emotions across a page "plane"—with the "temporal rhythm" commonly found in *shi* poetry as well as in *xiaoling* and many examples of *manci*.<sup>3</sup> While the temporal rhythm relies on a linear, sequential order of time, the spatial design depends on the principles of parallelism, juxtaposition, and correspondence. The transformation of the self-expressive mode took place in the experimentation by a number of poets after Jiang Kui with a subgenre of the song lyric called *yongwu ci* (song lyrics on objects), which became popular and important during the late Song.

Broadly speaking, the term *yongwu ci* refers to a song lyric that depicts an object. The word *wu*, translated as "object" here, is the term for anything that can be apprehended or perceived by the *xin* (mind). It is opposed to *wo* (the self) and *xin* (the mind), which refer to the experiencing subject. Thus *wu* connotes all concrete entities and phenomena in the material world and in human affairs, as well as abstract ideas and unreal and imaginary things. But the term *yongwu ci* has been used by poets and critics in a much narrower sense. It refers primarily to song lyrics on small objects in nature—such as flowers, birds, or insects—and never to landscapes and events in the poet's life or in history. In the thirteenth century, however, the poetic process involved in writing *yongwu ci* was extended far beyond the confines of lyric composition.

In writing a *yongwu* song lyric, the poet withdrew from the direct expression of his own experience, which constitutes the core of a poem; rather, he became an observer of his own complex inner state. The *yongwu* mode that emerged in the late Song represented a significant new development within the lyrical tradition. Although there were thematic links between *yongwu ci* and the two earlier subgenres, *yongwu shi* (poems on objects) and *yongwu fu* (rhapsodies on objects), that flourished in the late fifth century, because of differences in form and in the poetic process, *yongwu shi* and *yongwu fu* did not develop along

the lines of late Song *yongwu* song lyrics. As the following examples demonstrate, representative lyrics on objects in the late Song are usually cast in the so-called spatial mode.



Turning now to works that best illustrate the new aesthetics of the song lyric in the Southern Song, the following is a pair of poems on the plum blossom by Jiang Kui, who also wrote the accompanying preface and composed the music for them:

In the winter of the year *xinhai* [1191], I took a ship through the falling snow to visit Stone Lake [style of **Fan Chengda** (1126–1193)]. After I had stayed for a month, he handed me paper, requesting poetry and new tunes. I composed these two song lyrics, which Stone Lake held, fondling them in his hands, unwilling to put them down. He ordered a musician and a singing girl to practice them. The melodies were harmonious and graceful, and he entitled them “Anxiang” [Secret Fragrance] and “Shuying” [Dappled Shadows].

#### **C14.1**

##### **Secret Fragrance**

- The moonlight of the old days,  
2 How many times has it shone upon me  
Playing the flute by the plum trees?  
4 I called my jade lady to rise,  
Ignoring the chill, to pick blossoms with me.  
6 He Xun is now aging,  
His pen, once spring wind, is wholly forgotten.  
8 He's only bemused by the few flowers past the bamboos,  
Whose cold fragrance enters the banquet hall.
- 10 The River Country  
Is just now lonely and still.  
12 I sigh that the road is too long to send a blossom,  
And the evening snow begins to pile up.

- 14 Tears fall freely before the green wine pot;  
The red calyxes are speechless, disturbed by reminiscence.
- 16 Long shall I remember the places where we held hands:  
A thousand trees press against West Lake's cold green.
- 18 Petal by petal, all blown away,  
When shall I see them again?

[JBSCXZ, 280]<sup>4</sup>

							暗香	(àn xiāng)
old	time	moon	color				舊時月色 ▲	(jiù shí yuè sè)
reckon	how many	time	shine on	me			算幾番照我	(suàn jǐ fān zhào wǒ)
plum	side	play	flute				梅邊吹笛 ▲	(méi biān chuī dí)
call	rise	jade	person				喚起玉人	(huàn qǐ yù rén)
not	care	clear	cold	with	pull	pluck	不管清寒與攀摘 ▲	(bù guǎn qīng hán yǔ pān zhāi)
He	Xun	right	now	gradually	old		何遜而今漸老	(hé xùn ér jīn jiàn lǎo)
all	forget	fully	spring	wind	song lyric	pen	都忘卻、春風詞筆 ▲	(dōu wàng què chūn fēng cí bǐ)
but	surprise	at	bamboo	outside	sparse	blossom	但怪得、竹外疏花	(dàn guài dé zhú wài shū huā)
fragrance	cold	enter	jade	banquet			香冷入瑤席 ▲	(xiāng lěng rù yáo xí)
river	country						江國 ▲	(jiāng guó)
just now	lonely	still					正寂寂 ▲	(zhèng jì jì)
sigh	send	to	road	far away			嘆寄與路遙	(tàn jì yǔ lù yáo)
night	snow	first	pile up				夜雪初積 ▲	(yè xuě chū jī)
green	wine pot	easy	sob				翠尊易泣 ▲	(cuì zūn yì qì)
red	calyxes	have no	speech	disquieted	mutual	remember	紅萼無言耿相憶 ▲	(hóng è wú yán gěng xiāng yì)
long	remember	once	hold	hand			長記曾攜手處	(cháng jì céng xié shǒu chù)
thousand tree	press	West	Lake	cold	green		千樹壓、西湖寒碧 ▲	(qiān shù yā xī hú hán bì)
again	petal	petal	blow	fully	[particle]		又片片、吹盡也	(yòu piàn piàn chuī jìn yě)
what	time	see	[particle]				幾時見得 ▲	(jǐ shí jiàn dé)

## C14.2

### Dappled Shadows

- Mossy branches decked with jade;
- 2 A pair of little bluebirds  
Roost on them together.
- 4 When wandering we meet—  
By the corner of the fence in the dusk,
- 6 Without a word she leans on slender bamboos.  
Unaccustomed to the remote barbarian sands,



- 8 Zhaojun secretly longed for the Yangtze's climes.  
Surely it is her jade waistband  
10 That returns on moonlit nights,  
Transformed into this blossom so solitary.
- 12 The old palace tale still comes to mind:  
As the beauty slept,  
14 One blossom fluttered to her black moth-eyebrows,  
Don't be like the spring wind,  
16 Careless of beauty,  
But early prepare a gold chamber for it.
- 18 If one lets all the petals drift off with the current,  
He will resent hearing the sad tune for the Jade Dragon.  
20 If one waits till then to pursue that subtle fragrance,  
It will have entered a horizontal scroll over some small window.

[JBSCXZ, 316]

疏影

(shū yǐng)

moss      branch      deck with      jade

苔枝綴玉▲

there are      blue      bird      small      small

(tāi zhī zhuì yù)

有翠禽小小

branch      above/on      together      roost

(yǒu cuì qín xiǎo xiǎo)

### 枝上同宿 ▲

travel          in          together          meet

(zhī shàng tóng sù)

客裡相逢

fence      corner      yellow      dusk

(kè lǐ xiāng féng)

罐角黃昏

have no      speech      by oneself      lean on      slender      bamboo

(lí jiǎo huáng hūn)

無言自倚修竹▲

Zhao- jun not accustom barbarian sand far away

(wú yán zì yǐ xiū zhú)

昭君不慣胡沙遠

but            secretly            long for            river            south            river            north

(zhāo jūn bù guǎn hú shā yuǎn)

但暗憶、江南江北▲

think      wear      band      moon      night      return      back

(dàn àn yì jiāng nán jiāng běi)

想佩環、月夜歸來

transform    into    this    blossom    secluded    alone

(xiǎng pèi huán yuè yè guī lái)

化作此花幽獨▲

(huà zuò cǐ huā yǒu dǒu)

still	remember	deep	palace	old	event	猶記深宮舊事 (yóu jì shēn gōng jiù shì)	
that	person	just	sleep	in		那人正睡裡 (nà rén zhèng shuì lǐ)	
fly	near	moth	dark green			飛近蛾綠 ▲ (fēi jìn é lǜ)	
don't	be like	spring	wind			莫似春風 (mò sì chūn fēng)	
not	care	delicate	gracious			不管盈盈 (bù guǎn yíng yíng)	
early	for	arrange	prepare	gold	chamber	早與安排金屋 ▲ (zǎo yǔ ān pái jīn wū)	
however	let	every	piece	follow	waves	away	還教一片隨波去 (hái jiào yí piàn suí bō qù)
shall	but	resent	jade	dragon	mournful	tune	又卻怨、玉龍哀曲 ▲ (yòu què yuàn yù lóng āi qǔ)
wait	that	time	again	look for	secret	fragrance	等恁時、重見幽香 (děng nèn shí chóng miàn yōu xiāng)
already	enter	small	window	horizontal	scroll		已入小窗橫幅 ▲ (yǐ rù xiǎo chuāng héng fú)

Jiang Kui is known to history as an accomplished poet, musician, and literary and art critic.<sup>5</sup> His original compositions and treatises as well as random notes on music have survived from his time to become invaluable in the study of Song dynasty music. From the limited sources still available, we know that he was regarded by his contemporaries as a talented prose writer and calligrapher as well. Despite all this evidence of an artist and scholar par excellence, Jiang Kui was not one of the particularly prominent figures. Unlike most great Song poets who had double careers as statesmen and scholar-artists, he was never able to participate officially in the important affairs of his age. Successive failures in the civil service examination and other forms of official recruitment left him a *buyi*, a “man in linen (ordinary) clothes,” or a mere commoner, throughout his life. Jiang Kui was only in his early teens when his scholar-official father died, and his father’s death marked the beginning of the poet’s life of poverty. We know, for instance, that Jiang sold his calligraphy as one means of support. Other, perhaps more substantial, support came through the patronage of prominent friends, who often enjoyed wide acclaim as artists themselves.

Fan Chengda, mentioned in the preface to “Secret Fragrance” and “Dappled Shadows,” was one of Jiang Kui’s most prominent patron-friends. One anecdote concerning their friendship merits mention. When the poet left Fan Chengda’s residence in Suzhou for his own home in

Wuxing on the lunar New Year's Eve, as a parting gesture, Fan Chengda presented him with a maid of talent and beauty by the name of Xiaohong (Little Scarlet). That very same evening, as Jiang Kui and Xiaohong passed by the famous Drooping-Rainbow Bridge on West Lake, the poet wrote a quatrain about his journey:

These songs I newly made, their resonance most lovely,  
Xiaohong quietly sings, and I play the flute.  
The tune ends, we've passed all the pine-covered hills,  
Looking back: amid mists and waves, fourteen bridges.

[JBSCXZ, 280]

This lovely quatrain appears in Jiang Kui's collection of *shi* poetry. If the anecdote is indeed factual, the "songs" in the first line must allude to "Secret Fragrance" and "Dappled Shadows."

"Secret Fragrance" and "Dappled Shadows" are among the most quoted and admired works by Jiang Kui. The titles come from a regulated verse on the plum blossom by the poet-recluse **Lin Bu** (967–1028) of the early Northern Song; they are taken directly from the following couplet: "Dappled shadows hang aslant over clear shallow water; / Secret fragrance wafts in the moonlit dusk."<sup>6</sup> "Dappled shadows" and "secret fragrance" thus are two coordinate images for the plum blossom, referring to its shape and smell, respectively.

These two song lyrics exhibit a difficult and obscure style. Through the ages, scholars have offered diverse interpretations, ranging from taking them as a reminiscence about a woman whom Jiang Kui loved, to interpreting them as an expression of sorrow for his life as an unemployed scholar-artist far from home, to reading them as a lament for the capture of the last two Northern Song emperors, **Huizong** (r. 1100–1125) and **Qinzong** (r. 1125–1126), and their palace ladies by the **Jurchens** in 1126.<sup>7</sup> In fact, it is not feasible to focus on one interpretation to the exclusion of the other possible readings.

Of the two poems, "Secret Fragrance" is written in a comparatively lucid style. Its theme does seem to be the poet's reminiscence about a woman with whom he used to pick plum blossoms by West Lake. The blossom, mentioned explicitly in line 5, is not used as a metaphor for the woman but as an object that arouses in the poet memories of her. With the inclusion of *wo* (me) in line 2, Jiang Kui emphasizes the poem's

personal tone, but this indication is personal only in comparison with the other elements in the poem. The allusion in the third strophe to the poet He Xun (d. 518), who loved plum blossoms and wrote poems about them, is meant to be autobiographical.<sup>8</sup> Jiang Kui sees himself as an aging He Xun, too old to feel any real enthusiasm for flowers anymore. By this use of allusion, Jiang Kui attributes a certain degree of universality to his personal experience. The reference to He Xun also implies that his mind is really not so much on the blossom as on his “jade [that is, beautiful] lady.” The blossom is merely a reminder of her absence. This becomes clear in the beginning of the second stanza, when he says that the distance between them has grown too far for him “to send [her] a blossom.”

Throughout the entire poem, the experiencing subject and the experienced object (the blossoming plum) remain distinct, and the constitutive role of the former is also unmistakably clear. The management of time deserves attention also. “Secret Fragrance” is written in the framework of the lyrical present. It is in this present that the lyric speaker recalls the experience of plucking flowers and holding hands with a beautiful woman on cold moonlit nights by West Lake. This work is thus cast in the traditional self-expressive mode that relies on the lyrical moment of the present for its temporal coherence.

The strong personal tone of “Secret Fragrance” disappears in the subsequent piece. “Dappled Shadows,” by contrast, opens with an objective description of small jewel-like birds roosting together on mossy plum branches grown thick with jadelike blossoms. According to Fan Chengda’s *Meipu (Book of Plum Trees)*, the Shaoxing and Wuxing areas were known for a kind of plum tree called *taimei* (moss plum). The tree featured “branches gnarled and twisted in multifarious shapes. Scaly green moss seals up flower stems. There are also moss whiskers hanging among the branches, some of which are several inches long. Whenever the wind comes, green threads flutter in a most pleasing manner.”<sup>9</sup> There seems little doubt that Jiang Kui is referring in this poem to this special kind of plum, treasured by people living in the region. It is possible that Jiang Kui noticed moss plum trees at Fan Chengda’s home when he visited. “Jade,” in line 1, functions as a metaphor for the flowers; as is usual in such poems and song lyrics, the object written about (the blossoming plum) is not directly named. The beginning strophe of “Dappled Shadows” highlights not only the image of the blossom but also the togetherness symbolized by the little birds sleeping side by side. The

image of the “bluebirds” alludes to a story about a certain Zhao Shixiong of the late sixth century who once got drunk and fell asleep beneath a big plum in full bloom.<sup>10</sup> In his dream, Zhao Shixiong encountered a beautiful woman (the plum blossom fairy?) with whom he drank wine and, later, a boy dressed in green who laughed and sang, playing and dancing about. The next morning, Zhao awoke to bluebirds chirping in the plum tree above. The use of this allusion perhaps indicates that Jiang Kui was reminded of Zhao Shixiong’s experience when he saw moss plum trees at his friend’s residence. Although not clearly suggested, it is possible that Jiang Kui means to imply that Zhao Shixiong must have felt disappointed and lonesome when he woke up to see only bluebirds rather than a beautiful woman and a boy. The first strophe can then be seen as pointing to the poet’s inner state (that of solitude).

In the second strophe, it is not said who meets whom, but from the context we can speculate that it is the lyric speaker who encounters the blossoming plum. These first two strophes form a sequence depicting perhaps what Jiang Kui, as a visitor, had seen at Fan Chengda’s house, although he has indicated nothing about this in the preface. There also exists a surface contrast between the two strophes. *Ke li xiang feng* (meeting each other away from home or when one is visiting somebody else) suggests the idea of wandering; hence the encounter is entirely different from that of the bluebirds’ roosting together on the branch. The blossoming plum is personified, described as leaning, speechless and alone, against the slender bamboo in the dusk. The dominant feeling of solitude here contrasts with the preceding surface atmosphere of togetherness. Just as togetherness belongs to the bluebirds, the sense of solitude refers to the plum tree and to the lyric speaker, who is away from home (*ke li*).

Another level of equation is found in the second strophe, which contains an allusion to a couplet from the poem “Beautiful Lady” (Jiaren), by **Du Fu** (712–770): “The day is cold, her green sleeves thin; / The sun sets as she leans on slender bamboos.”<sup>11</sup> Du Fu’s “Beautiful Lady” depicts a highbred woman who has become a wanderer after having lost her brothers and been abandoned by her husband in a time of chaos and disorder. To preserve her integrity and purity, she lives in seclusion and solitude. This comparison of the blossoming plum and the beautiful lady provides the background for the subsequent strophes.

The second half of the first stanza, consisting of the third and fourth strophes, contains an allusion to Wang Zhaojun, a concubine of the

emperor Han Yuandi (r. 48–33 B.C.E.) who was married to a chieftain of the **Xiongnu** tribes on the northern border of the Han territory in 33 B.C.E. A story about Wang Zhaojun in the *Xijing zaji* (*Miscellaneous Notes of the Western Capital*) relates that Han Yuandi kept so many concubines that, in order to select which ones he would favor, he ordered court artisans to paint a portrait of each.<sup>12</sup> Wishing to capture the emperor's attention, all the concubines but one bribed the artists. Wang Zhaojun, confident of her own beauty, did not offer a bribe and in consequence was represented as the ugliest. Later, when the Xiongnu chieftain demanded marriage to one of the Han emperor's concubines, Wang Zhaojun was chosen. When Han Yuandi summoned her to an audience before her departure, he discovered that, to his regret, she was in fact the most beautiful woman in his palace. Wang Zhaojun became a popular subject in later Chinese poetry, which focuses not on her beauty but on her resentment at having had to leave her homeland for the cold and desolate barbarian territory, and on her homesickness. Du Fu's regulated verse "Thoughts on Historical Sites, No. 3," laments her grievance, solitude, and homesickness; it includes the couplet from which Jiang Kui derived his fourth strophe: "Her spring-wind face was judged from a painting; / Her spirit in vain returned with her jeweled waistband on moonlit nights."<sup>13</sup> The second strophe of the first stanza in "Dappled Shadows" makes explicit the equation between the blossoming plum and a beauty by an allusion to the other Du Fu poem, "Beautiful Lady." The third strophe shifts to Wang Zhaojun's homesickness while living in the barbarian desert. In the concluding strophe, Jiang Kui imagines that it must be Wang Zhaojun's spirit that has come back to the south and transformed itself into the solitary plum blossom. This equation greatly increases the feelings of solitude and homesickness that have already been set forth in the third strophe.

Taking the first stanza as a whole, we can say that, on one level, the allusions to Wang Zhaojun and Du Fu's "Beautiful Lady" may be metaphorical of Jiang Kui's sadness about his own life as a wandering scholar-artist and perhaps point to his reminiscence about a woman he had been in love with. On another level, the image of *husha* (barbarian sands) cannot adequately be interpreted as a mere metaphor for the poet's unhappiness. *Husha* is most often associated in Chinese literature with the tribal people in the north, who had been a constant threat to the Chinese throughout history. In the poetry of Tang poets, notably **Li Bai** (701–762) and Wang Jian (ca. 767–830), plum blossoms sometimes



carry associations with exile, displacement, and the frontier.<sup>14</sup> More immediately relevant to “Dappled Shadows” is a section from the song lyric “Yan’er mei” (Charming Eyes), composed by the Northern Song emperor Huizong on his way north as a captive of the Jurchens:

With people gone, the flower city is desolate;  
My spring dreams go around the Tartar sands.  
Where is my homeland?  
How can I bear to listen to the barbarian flute  
Playing to the end of “The Plum Blossom”?

[JBSCXZ, 348]

These lines summon the same chain of connections (the barbarian flute, plum blossoms, the loss of home and country) as found in the poems by Li Bai and Wang Jian. It seems probable that Jiang Kui also had Emperor Huizong’s song lyric in mind when he incorporated textual allusions from Du Fu’s poem on Wang Zhaojun. Although Jiang Kui wrote “Secret Fragrance” and “Dappled Shadows” sixty-five years after Emperor Huizong, Emperor Qinzong, and their palace ladies were taken prisoner by the invading Jurchens, the Southern Song government’s policy of buying peace from the invaders prevented poets from writing about this humiliating national tragedy in any explicit manner. If this line of interpretation is valid, the inner state that Jiang Kui points to in the first half of “Dappled Shadows” involves not just his personal unhappiness but also a political lament symbolized in the suffering of such famous people as Wang Zhaojun and Emperors Huizong and Qinzong.

What is peculiar about the use of textual allusions in the first stanza is the swift shift from one expression of time to another. On the surface, the first two strophes depict what the poet sees in the present moment, although the allusions to the Zhao Shixiong story and to Du Fu’s “Beautiful Lady” have infused a sense of the past into this beginning section of the song lyric. The third strophe explicitly plunges the reader into a thoroughly different mode of past time. The link between the plum blossom and Wang Zhaojun is not made clear until the fourth strophe (and the possible relevance of the story about the last two emperors of the Northern Song is left totally ambiguous). Since here it is not Wang Zhaojun *herself* but *her spirit* who returns to become the blossom, the third strophe presents that “other” and past time coexisting with the

images of the present. Although there is mention of “dusk” in the second strophe and “moonlit nights” in the fourth, these references to specific moments do not form an integrative temporal rhythm for the entire first stanza. The coherence of the first half of “Dappled Shadows” relies on the parallelism, juxtaposition, and correspondence of the strophes and their association with the themes of loneliness, separation, and homesickness. Thus the first stanza operates as a spatial design.

The second stanza sheds more light on this structural strategy. It opens with an allusion to the following story:

The daughter of Song Wudi (r. 420–423), Princess Shouyang, lay down under the eaves of Hanzhang Palace on the Seventh Day of the First Moon. A plum blossom fell onto her forehead and became a five-petaled flower. She brushed at it but it would not come off.... Three days later, she washed [her face] and the flower then fell off. The palace ladies marveled at this and began to imitate her. It became what is called today a “plum blossom ornament.”<sup>15</sup>

The opening strophe of the second stanza continues the association of a plum blossom and a woman made in the first stanza. As the story indicates, the blossom became firmly attached to Princess Shouyang’s forehead; thus the blossom and the woman merged into one entity. By alluding to Princess Shouyang, Jiang Kui is perhaps suggesting that the blossom reminds him of the ornament on the forehead of some woman in his private life. So there may be a remote metaphorical relation between this strophe and a private experience of the poet’s. But as it stands in the song lyric, the textual allusion works more like a remembered historical experience, resembling the allusion to Wang Zhaojun in the third strophe of the first stanza.

Apart from suggesting the idea of a life of frivolity in the palace, the allusion to Princess Shouyang also introduces the image of a falling plum blossom, which is immediately taken up by the next strophe, where “But early prepare a gold chamber for it” alludes to another palace tale. When **Han Wudi** (r. 140–87 B.C.E.) was a child, an aunt asked him how he felt about having his cousin A Jiao become his wife. He replied, “If I had A Jiao, I would keep her in a golden chamber.”<sup>16</sup> This story and the accounts of Princess Shouyang, Wang Zhaojun, and Emperor Huizong are “old palace tales” (*shen’gong jiushi*). The upshot of the allusion here



is that a person in a position of power should always carefully protect the blossom—his beautiful lady—so that she will not be left to suffer. Indeed, if he allows the petals to drift off, he will surely have cause for regret, captured in the painful recognition of a sad melody (“Jade Dragon” is the name of a flute, and the old tune “Plum Blossoms Are Falling” was composed especially for this instrument).<sup>17</sup> Moreover, as the very last strophe suggests, he will be left to look for the blossom’s subtle fragrance not in the real object but in a facsimile, a painting hung above a window. What the ending strophes of “Dappled Shadows” suggest is what happened to Wang Zhaojun: Emperor Han Yuandi’s failure to protect her, the most beautiful woman in his palace, became the source of her everlasting grief, solitude, homesickness, and suffering.

A number of images are common to both “Secret Fragrance” and “Dappled Shadows”: the blossoming plum, bamboos, beautiful women, the moon, the Yangtze River, and the spring wind that blows away the petals of the plum blossoms. These images certainly enhance the complementarity of the pieces. Obviously, the “moonlight of the old days,” which begins “Secret Fragrance,” includes the moonlight on the nights in which Wang Zhaojun’s spirit returns to the south. And the image of the plum blossoms’ being blown away that ends “Secret Fragrance” makes the picture of the petals carried off by the current toward the end of “Dappled Shadows” more poignant. But these two pieces, however complementary, also display two very different artistic modes.

Let us now examine a song lyric from the late Song whose subject is not an object but that nevertheless is composed in the new aesthetic mode of *yongwu ci*. It is set to the tune of “Yingti xu” (Prelude to the Oriole’s Song), written and composed by Wu Wenying (ca. 1200–1260):

### **C14.3**

#### **Prelude to the Oriole’s Song**

- Just now the lingering chill plagues me, sick from wine—  
2 I close the finely wrought door of aloewood.  
Swallows come late, flying into the west of the city,  
4 As if to tell us matters of spring are almost over.  
Borne on painted boats, the Qingming festival has slipped away,  
6 In the clearing mist, trailing are the Wu Palace trees.  
I muse over how a traveler’s thoughts drift in the wind,

8 Changing into weightless catkins.

Ten years at West Lake,  
10 Tying my horse by the willows,  
Chasing after charming dust and yielding vapor.  
12 Following red petals upstream, I was summoned to Fairy Creek,  
And Brocade Maid secretly conveyed your deep feelings.  
14 You leaned on the silver screen—spring was expansive, our dream  
limited;  
Rouged tears falling soaked your singing fan and gold-thread gown.  
16 At dusk the dike was empty;  
Lightly we took the slanting sun's rays  
18 And returned them all to the gulls and egrets.

Hidden orchids grew old quickly,  
20 And pollias live again,  
While I still sojourn in the river country.  
22 Since parting I've revisited the Six Bridges—no news;  
Our affair's in the past—flowers have withered,  
24 Jade has been interred, fragrance buried,  
Through how many bouts of wind and rain?  
26 Long waves envied your glances,  
Distant hills were shamed by your brows;  
28 Fishermen's lamps scattered reflections in the spring river where we  
spent the night—  
I recall how, with small oars, my Peach Root crossed over.  
30 The green mansion seems a mirage  
Where I inscribed parting poems on the by-now ruined wall,  
32 Tear-laden ink is gray and dull with dust.  
From a high pavilion I gaze into the distance  
34 At the color of grass at heaven's edge  
And sigh that coarse white ramie has half overtaken my locks.  
36 Silently I mull over the traces—tears of parting, playful spit<sup>18</sup>—  
Still staining your silk handkerchief;

- 38 The phoenix, wings drooping, has lost its way,  
The simurgh no longer dances on the broken mirror.
- 40 Fervently I want to inscribe  
My everlasting sorrow in a letter,
- 42 But passing wild geese sink into blue mists over far seas.  
In vain I play my love longing into the mournful zither's strings;
- 44 Grieving from a thousand *li* away in the southland,  
With the bitter melody I summon you again,
- 46 Is your sundered soul still there?

[WMCCJS, 191–193]<sup>19</sup>

							鶯啼序 (yīng tí xù)
lingering	chill	just now	plague	sick with	wine		殘寒正欺病酒 (cán hán zhèng qī bìng jiǔ)
close	aloewood	—	wrought	door			掩沉香繡戶 ▲ (yǎn chén xiāng xiù hù)
swallow	come	late	fly	into	west	city	燕來晚、飛入西城 (yàn lái wǎn fēi rù xī chéng)
as if	tell	spring	matter	late	evening		似說春事遲暮 ▲ (sì shuō chūn shì chí mù)
painted	boat	carry	Qing	Ming	passed	over	畫船載、清明過卻 (huà chuán zài qīng míng guò què)
clear	mist	luxuriant	supple	Wu	Palace	tree	晴煙冉冉吳宮樹 ▲ (qíng yān rǎn rǎn wú gōng shù)
reflect	traveler	feeling	drift	sway			念羈情游蕩 (niàn jī qíng yóu dàng)
follow	wind	change	into	light	catkin		隨風化為輕絮 ▲ (suí fēng huà wéi qīng xù)
ten	year	West	Lake				十載西湖 (shí zǎi xī hú)
beside	willow	tie	horse				傍柳繫馬 (bàng liǔ xì mǎ)
chase	charming	dust	supple	mist			趁嬌塵軟霧 ▲ (chèn jiāo chén ruǎn wù)
follow up	red	gradually	summon	into	Fairy	Creek	溯紅漸、招入仙溪 (sù hóng jiàn zhāo rù xiān xī)

Brocade	Maid	secretly	convey	deep	feeling		錦兒偷寄幽素 ▲ (jǐn ér tōu jì yōu sù)
lean on	silver	screen	spring	vast	dream	narrow	倚銀屏、春寬夢窄 (yǐ yín píng chūn kuān mèng zhǎi)
broken	rouge	soak	song	fan	gold	thread	斷紅濕、歌納金縷 ▲ (duàn hóng shī gē nà jīn lǚ)
dusk	dike	empty					咽隄空 (mínɡ dī kōng)
lightly	take	slanting	sun				輕把斜陽 (qīng bǎ xié yáng)
always	return	gull	egret				總還鷗鷺 ▲ (zǒng huán ōu lù)
hidden	orchid	quickly	grow old				幽蘭旋老 (yōu lán xuán lǎo)
pollia	—	again	live				杜若還生 (dù ruò huán shēng)
water	village	still	lodge at	sojourn			水鄉尚寄旅 ▲ (shuǐ xiāng shàng jì lǚ)
part	after	visit	Six	Bridges	have no	news	別後訪、六橋無信 (bié hòu fǎng liù qiáo wú xìn)
affair	past	flower	wither				事往花萎 (shì wǎng huā wěi)
inter	jade	bury	fragrance				瘞玉埋香 (yì yù mái xiāng)
how many	round	wind	rain				幾番風雨 ▲ (jǐ fān fēng yǔ)
long	wave	envy	glance				長波妒盼 (cháng bō dù pàn)
distant	mountain	shame	black brows				遙山羞黛 (yáo shān xiū dài)
fisherman	lamp	distribute	shadow	spring	river	sleep	漁燈分影春江宿 (yú dēng fēn yǐng chūn jiāng sù)
remember	that	time					記當時、 (jì dāng shí)
short	oar	Peach	Root	cross			短楫桃根渡 ▲ (duǎn jí táo gēn dù)
green	mansion	seem	like				青樓彷彿 (qīng lóu fǎng fú)
at	parting	ruined	wall	inscribe	poem		臨分敗壁題詩 (lín fēn bài bì tí shī)
tear	ink	gray	dull	dust	soil		淚墨慘澹塵土 ▲ (lèi mò cǎn dàn chén tǔ)

precipitous	pavilion	gaze	limit				危亭望極 (wēi tíng wàng jí)
grass	color	heaven	edge				草色天涯 (cǎo sè tiān yá)
sigh	sideburn	invade	half	white ramie			嘆鬢侵半苧 ▲ (tàn bìn qīn bàn zhù)
secretly	mull	over	parting	trace	playful	spit	暗點檢、離痕歎唾 (àn diǎn jiǎn lí hén huān tuò)
still	stain	shark (silk)	kerchief				尚染蛟綃 (shàng rǎn jiāo xiāo)
drooping	phoenix	lost	return				彈鳳迷歸 (duǒ fèng mí guī)
broken	mirror	lazy	dance				破鸞慵舞 ▲ (pò luán yōng wǔ)
fervently	diligently	want to	inscribe				殷勤待寫 (yīn qín dài xiě)
letter	inside	long lasting	sorrow				書中長恨 (shū zhōng cháng hèn)
blue	mist	vast	sea	sink	passing	wild goose	藍霞遶海沉過雁 (lán xiá liáo hǎi chén guò yàn)
in vain	love	longing	play	into	mournful	zither strings	漫相思、彈入哀箏柱 ▲ (màn xiāng sī tán rù āi zhēng)
grieving	heart	thousand	mile	south-	land		傷心千里江南 (shāng xīn qiān lǐ jiāng nán)
resentful	melody	again	summon				怨曲重招 (yuàn qǔ chóng zhāo)
sundered	soul	be there	or not				斷魂在否 ▲ (duàn hún zài fǒu)

Wu Wenying was one of the best *ci* poets of the Southern Song. Just like Jiang Kui, Wu Wenying never entered officialdom and remained a commoner all his life. He worked for a period in the clerical staff of prominent officials. He appears to have lived all his life in present-day **Jiangsu** and **Zhejiang** Provinces and stayed for the longest period of time in the cultural centers of Suzhou and Hangzhou, enjoying the patronage of certain prominent people in the region.<sup>20</sup> He was one of just a small number of *ci* writers who had dual competence in poetry and music. Divided into four stanzas and containing 240 characters, Wu Wenying's "Prelude to the Oriole's Song" is the longest in the entire repertory of song lyric works still in existence.

Wu Wenying's collected works include many passionate song lyrics devoted to the memory of a woman (or women); all are cast in similar

language and images.<sup>21</sup> This has prompted a few modern Chinese scholars to speculate about the romances in Wu Wenying's life. Unfortunately, these scholars have derived their speculations solely from the poet's lyrics, without any corroboration from other, more reliable materials. One can at best say that on the basis of their shared language, images, and mood, these many song lyrics, including "Prelude to the Oriole's Song," are powerful expressions of Wu Wenying's remembrance of lost love.

The modern scholar Liu Yongji suggests that the poem may have been written late in Wu Wenying's life when the poet revisited alone the places where he had lived with his beloved.<sup>22</sup> Some of the phrases and events depicted in this poem can be found in many of his works about love, presumably written at different times in his life. It is conceivable that "Prelude to the Oriole's Song" is an attempt by Wu Wenying late in his life to integrate into a grander artistic design the images and expressions referring to his most memorable experiences.

This great long poem consists of a series of recollections arranged in accordance with the logic of a spatial design. Its four stanzas focus on the following four themes, respectively: (1) lament for spring's passing, (2) joy of union, (3) pain of separation, and (4) mourning for the dead.<sup>23</sup> It moves from the beginning to its end by way of a tortuous path, revealing the poet's complex inner state.

The time at the opening is late spring. Already "sick from wine," the lyric speaker suffers from the "lingering chill" and shuts his door. This image of a person suffering from the effects of wine and a spring chill can be found in a poem set to the tune "Feng ru song" (The Wind Comes Through the Pines) that begins with the line "Listening to the wind and rain as I pass this Qingming Festival."<sup>24</sup> The idea of staying indoors to reminisce about the past in the opening strophe is also a theme in "Feng ru song," in "Xi qiuhua" (Lamenting Autumn's Glory), which begins, "The delicate noise of the remaining crickets,"<sup>25</sup> and in another poem, also set to "Prelude to the Oriole's Song," that begins, "Across the pond, the boat penetrates a lavish brocade."<sup>26</sup> The first strophe thus presents images depicting recurrent behavior rather than a unique event.

The second strophe speaks of the late-coming swallows, as though to announce that spring is almost over. On the surface, this may be a description of what the lyric speaker sees outside his house after he has shut the door. But there is perhaps a deeper level of meaning here. Wu Wenying has used the word "swallow" elsewhere to symbolize the

woman he loved; for instance, in the preface to a poem written to the tune “Jiangdu chun” (Spring in the Crimson City) is the line “The swallow has been dead for a long time,” and the poem itself begins, “The swallow falls from the south mansion.”<sup>27</sup> The strophe may also mean that, in recalling his first meeting with the woman, the poet laments that he had not met her earlier, and, as a result, their romantic affair (“matters of spring”) was over all too soon. In fact, without this deeper meaning, the lament for spring seems quite pointless. Similarly, the third strophe also carries two levels of meaning. To be sure, these lines can probably be read as descriptive of the immediate experience of boating on West Lake, but this interpretation alone ignores their depth. Wu Wenying may be remembering his probably numerous journeys in a boat from Hangzhou to Suzhou with his beloved. In any case, the line “In the clearing mist, trailing are the Wu Palace trees” does not seem to describe the scenery on West Lake. Rather, it is reminiscent of the following lines from a song lyric set to the tune “Ruihe xian” (The Immortal of the Auspicious Crane):

...clear-weather threads pull on my chaotic feelings;  
Facing the setting sun over the Cang River,  
blossoms fly and my love is far away;  
Drooping willows darken the Wu Palace.

[WMCCJS, 10–11]

As the last strophe moves from the “clearing mist” to comparing the traveler’s thoughts to trailing willow catkins, such thoughts naturally embody feelings of separation, and the idea of lament is implied in the passing of spring, the general theme of the first stanza. It should be clear by now that to fully understand the stanza’s richness, we cannot simply progress from strophe to strophe as they unfold in the sequence of the song lyric. Rather, we must understand that the lines externalize the poet’s inner state through parallels between the surface significance of the images and the allusive meaning of phrases and expressions derived from Wu Wenying’s other works. And the poet’s lament, like his reminiscing about the past and his travels with a woman he loved, is itself a recurring mental activity.

Also divided into four strophes, the second stanza describes, by focusing on four focal points, the joy of meeting. In the first stanza,



although the images are associated with past experiences, the present moment is clearly its starting point. By contrast, the second stanza consists of flashbacks only. The first three lines present a summary of the poet's romantic life in Hangzhou: "charming dust and yielding vapor" present a beautiful image of the lovely misty scenes around West Lake and the dust stirred up by carriages carrying revelers (especially ladies). In another song lyric, set to the tune "Yi jiuyou" (Remembering Old Journeys), Wu Wenying wrote about the same kind of activity:

On the road over Broken Bridge by West Lake,  
I reckon, the drooping willows where I tied my horse  
Must still be leaning.

[WMCCJS, 336]

In the second strophe, Wu Wenying devotes his attention to one unforgettable encounter with a woman on a river near West Lake. As in another poem, set to the tune "Du jiangyun sanfan" (Three Shifts of the Mode of "River-Crossing Clouds"), the lyric speaker abandons his horse, gets into a boat, and is summoned into a fairyland-like residence. In that poem, there are the following lines:

Where the old dike forks like the tail of a swallow,  
Laurel oars move with the hovering terns—  
My horse's halter leans against broken clouds.

[WMCCJS, 4–6]

In "Prelude to the Oriole's Song," Wu Wenying compares his romantic encounter with those in other well-known stories: the first, of two young men—Liu Chen and Ruan Zhao—who fall in love with two fairy maidens on Mount Tiantai, and the second, the love affair between Zhang Cheng and a courtesan named Yang Aiai. Brocade Maid is Yang Aiai's maidservant, who acts as secret go-between for her mistress.<sup>28</sup> As with the textual and historical allusions that Jiang Kui uses in "Dappled Shadows," there is no explicit comparison in "Prelude to the Oriole's Song" of these figures with the poet's own experience. The next two lines succinctly describe the love as experienced by Wu Wenying and his beloved after their encounter. Although the "spring" symbolizing their love and passion was vast, their shared "dream"—their actual time together—



was all too limited. The line “Rouged tears falling soaked your singing fan and gold-thread gown” can, but does not necessarily, refer to the lovers’ final parting. It likely alludes to the song “Gold-Thread Gown,” during whose performance the courtesan deeply understands that, since time passes quickly, their dreamlike existence together will soon be over, and so she sheds tears. In this way, the line anticipates the theme of separation in the third stanza. Wu Wenying concludes the second stanza with a strophe that subtly describes the joy of being together. As the lovers enjoy each other’s company, they turn over the beautiful sunset to the “gulls and egrets,” since they are too absorbed to enjoy it. With the exception of the first line, “Ten years at West Lake,” the whole of the second stanza is made up of fragments of experience from the poet’s own life and from legend. These juxtaposed fragments, while they belong to the past, have in fact lost their pastness and appear immediate and timeless, expressing the poet’s inner state.

The third stanza describes the pang of separation from four angles. It begins with a vignette of the place—possibly Suzhou—where the poet stayed as a sojourner after separating from his beloved. “The river country” must refer to Suzhou rather than to Hangzhou because the latter was a bustling capital city in the Southern Song, and thus the word “country” would not have been appropriate. This opening corresponds to “Ten years at West Lake,” which begins the second stanza and at the same time echoes the feelings of lament for spring, for time passing and separation, and for living the life of a wanderer. In the next four lines, Wu Wenying uses a series of flashbacks to recall his revisits to haunts of former days and the death of his beloved. This is followed by an abrupt shift to a beautiful recitation of his beloved’s enchantments and the night spent together on the spring river. On one level, this third strophe is a supplement to the section in the previous stanza about the summons to Fairy Creek. His arrival at her place, his first impressions of her, and their first night together must remain memorable images. It should be noted that wavelike glances and hill-like eyebrows must not be taken as clichés, because they hold a special significance for Wu Wenying. In the song lyric “Suochuang han” (The Carved Lattice Window Is Cold), which describes in some detail the poet’s first meeting with and final parting from this important woman, there is the line “One glance, good enough to exchange for a thousand pieces of gold.”<sup>29</sup> Further, in another song lyric, set to the tune “Jiangdu chun,” describing the experience of encountering a woman who looks like his beloved, Wu writes:

At the inn,  
Suddenly I meet a courtesan  
Who looks so much like my love—  
Especially her wavelike glance!

[WMCCJS, 210–211]

We can find descriptions similar to “Fishermen’s lamps scattered reflections in the spring river where we spent the night” in several song lyrics as well. The recurrence of these images in Wu Wenying’s works indicates that they continued to be poignant and important points of reference throughout his life. When a person is in a mood for remembering and mourning, it is natural for such images to arise in his mind. And in such reminiscing, the shifting from one image to another may occur without following any logical or temporal order. Wu Wenying’s intermingling of temporal and spatial dimensions demonstrates his skill at closely rendering his own inner emotional states. The lines in this part of the poem, recounting how the lovers spent the night together on the river, parallel those at the end of the second stanza, telling of their meeting. Toward the end of the third stanza, the poet describes the wretchedness of parting in a straightforward manner. The “ruined wall” (*baibi*) most likely refers to the present ruined condition of the wall on which he had inscribed a poem on parting from his beloved. This concluding strophe fuses past and present. Just as in the second stanza, this section consists mainly of clusters of images from past experiences. There are three strophes about pain and one about joy; this arrangement stands in precise opposition to that found in the second stanza.

The final stanza focuses on the theme of mourning for the dead and so brings the entire poem to a close. The first strophe of this stanza strongly parallels the beginning of the poem, where the poet has shut his door to recollect the past. Here, he ascends into a pavilion to “gaze [pensively] into the distance.” For Wu Wenying, ascending into a pavilion, leaning against a building, or simply standing still to gaze mournfully at the setting sun or into the distance is a distinct and recurring topos. In the song lyric written to the tune “Sanshu mei” (Three Beautiful Women) are the lines “Standing by the bridge for a long time, / About to leave, tears fill my face in the setting sun.”<sup>30</sup> Another lyric, set to the tune “Yehe hua” (Magnolia Pumila) concludes with the lines:

Upstairs in my old friend's house,  
Who can I be with  
to look at the wild grass in the setting sun?

[WMCCJS, 286–287]

Again, I would argue that these phrases are not meaningless clichés; rather, they constitute images from life experience that the poet felt compelled to return to again and again.

The second strophe brings in the power of a memento (a handkerchief) to conjure up thoughts of the person associated with it. The traces of “tears of parting” and “playful spit” correspond to the themes of lament at parting and joy of meeting described in the second and third stanzas, respectively. Wu Wenying uses an allusion to Fan Tai’s “Poem on a Simurgh” as a metaphor for his debilitating loneliness.<sup>31</sup> In the third strophe, the poet writes that he has no way of expressing his “everlasting sorrow in a letter” to his dead beloved, so he channels all his powerful feelings into a zither tune instead. This great song lyric concludes with an allusion to lines in the poem “Summoning the Soul” (Zhao hun), in the **Chuci**: “The eye travels on a thousand *li*, and the heart breaks for sorrow. / O soul, come back! Alas for the Southern Land!”<sup>32</sup> The allusion expresses the poet’s deep grief over the death of the woman he loved. Since Wu Wenying alludes to “Summoning the Soul” in other works, the allusion here may well refer to both the *Chuci* and his own works. This simultaneous reference to two sources operates like the allusion to the story of Liu Chen and Ruan Zhao in the second stanza. The early Republican scholar Chen Xun (1870–1942) was perceptive in noting that the last strophe of the fourth stanza parallels the ending of the first stanza.<sup>33</sup> The closing of the song lyric—the poet’s moods, the mournful tune he is playing, and the wandering soul of his dead love—are like “weightless catkins” drifting in the wind. The implied parallel between the conclusions of the first and last stanzas is important because it leaves the reader with a strong sense of tragic helplessness.

We can see from this short analysis that “Prelude to the Oriole’s Song” has a tightly knit structure. It is divided into four large sections, each with a central theme and each, in turn, subdivided into four strophes with their own specific focuses. In the arrangement of the major themes of lament for spring’s passing, joy of meeting, pangs at separation, and mourning

for the dead, the work can be said to have a temporal development. It begins with the poet's present thoughts and actions, continues to depict his recollections of meeting with and parting from his love, and returns to the present moment at the very end. But the image fragments that depict his present actions and thoughts are also found in song lyrics that he wrote about previous occasions. Further, the themes and subthemes are not organized into a chronological whole but are spread out as if across a canvas, and the unity of the work is maintained through the parallelism, juxtaposition, and correspondence among these themes and subthemes. "Prelude to the Oriole's Song" presents a vast spatial design for Wu Wenying's remembrance of a woman whom he very much loved. Even though it is not regarded as a bona fide *yongwu ci*, it is clearly not cast in the traditional mode of direct self-expression but in the artistic mode characterizing Jiang Kui's "Dappled Shadows." In terms of its structure, Wu Wenying's "Prelude to the Oriole's Song" is a song lyric on a kind of object, the complex processes of remembrance, that constituted his inner state as he wrote this masterpiece.

Shuen-fu Lin

#### NOTES

1. Zhu Yizun, "Introduction," in *Ci zong* (Selected Song Lyrics [from the Tang Through the Yuan Dynasties]) (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1978), 11.

2. Kao Yu-kung, "Xiaoling zai shi chuantong zhong de diwei" (The Place of *Xiaoling* Lyrics in the Poetic Tradition), *Cixue* 9 (1992): 20. I have discussed Kao's idea of spatial design and Joseph Frank's idea of spatial form relevant to the works of such twentieth-century writers in the West as Marcel Proust, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Ezra Pound, and T. S. Eliot in "Space-Logic in the Longer Song Lyrics of the Southern Sung: Reading Wu Wen-ying's *Ying-t'i-hsü*," *Journal of Sung-Yuan Studies* 25 (1995): 169–191. Joseph Frank's ideas can be found in *The Idea of Spatial Form* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1991).

3. Kao, "Xiaoling," 8, 20.

4. Huang Zhaohan has created a rather comprehensive collection of available explanatory notes and interpretations on all of Jiang Kui's song lyrics in his book *Jiang Baishi ci xiangzhu* (*The Ci Poetry of Jiang Baishi, with Detailed Annotations*) (Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 1998). I use this text as the main source of the texts of Jiang Kui's two song lyrics and of the information and ideas of previous scholars on them.

5. Some of my discussion on Jiang Kui has been extracted from Shuen-fu Lin, *The Transformation of the Chinese Lyrical Tradition: Chiang K'uei and Southern Sung Tz'u Poetry* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978). My views on Jiang Kui's poetry have changed somewhat in the interim; these changes are reflected or accounted for in the discussion in this chapter.

6. Huang, *Jiang Baishi ci xiangzhu*, 281.

7. Huang, *Jiang Baishi ci xiangzhu*, 280–352.

8. Huang, *Jiang Baishi ci xiangzhu*, 282.

9. Huang, *Jiang Baishi ci xiangzhu*, 316.

10. Huang, *Jiang Baishi ci xiangzhu*, 316–317.

11. Huang, *Jiang Baishi ci xiangzhu*, 317.
12. *Wuchao xiaoshuo* (Fictions from Five Dynasties), *juan* 3, *Xijing zaji* (Miscellaneous Notes of the Western Capital), ab.
13. Huang, *Jiang Baishi ci xiangzhu*, 317.
14. Liu Wan has discussed this and other issues in her brilliant article on “Dappled Shadows”: “Jiang kui shuying ci de yuyan neibu guanxi ji shidian yiyi” (Jiang Kui’s “Shuying”: The Internal Patterns of Its Language and the Meanings of the Allusions Used Therein), *Cixue* 9 (1992): 22–30.
15. Huang, *Jiang Baishi ci xiangzhu*, 317.
16. Huang, *Jiang Baishi ci xiangzhu*, 317.
17. Huang, *Jiang Baishi ci xiangzhu*, 318.
18. *Huantuo*, rendered “playful spit” here, seems to allude to the following lines in the song lyric “Yihu zhu” (A Bushel of Pearls), by Li Yu (937–978):

Charmingly she leans across the embroidered bed,  
Chews thoroughly at scraps of red wool,  
Laughs, and then spits at her lover.

It seems clear that Wu Wenying uses this allusion to Li Yu’s woman’s dalliance as a symbol of his happy union with his own beloved.

19. This translation is an adaptation of the magnificent translations in Grace S. Fong’s study of the thirteenth-century *ci* writer, *Wu Wenying and the Art of Southern Song Ci Poetry* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987), 110–112, and in Stephen Owen, “A Door Finely Wrought: Memory and Art,” in *Remembrances: The Experience of the Past in Classical Chinese Literature* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986), 114–130. In the translation, I have supplied the pronoun “I” throughout, which is absent in the original Chinese text. I hope that the addition of “I” has not spoiled the quality of spatiality in the song lyric.

20. Yang Tiefu, *Wu Mengchuang ci jianshi* (*The Ci Poetry of Wu Wenying, with Notes and Explanations*), ed. Chen Bangyan and Zhang Qihui (Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 1992), 1.

21. Much of my interpretation of Wu Wenying’s “Prelude to the Oriole’s Song” and of other materials related to this great song lyric is drawn from Lin, “Space-Logic in the Longer Song Lyrics of the Southern Sung.”

22. Liu Yongji, *Weidishi shuo ci* (*Discourses on the Song Lyric from the Weidi Studio*) (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1987), 58.

23. The first three themes were noted by the late Qing and early Republican scholar Chen Xun in his book *Haixiao shuoci* (*Haixiao’s Discourses on Ci Poetry*), in *Mengchuang ciji* (*The Collected Ci Poetry of Mengchuang*) (Taipei: Shijie shuju, 1967). Curiously, he did not give a theme to the last section of the song lyric (8b–9a). The modern scholar Wan Yunjun has added *pingdiao* (mourning for the dead) as the theme of the fourth section, but he has changed the theme for the first section to *duyou* (journey alone) (“Lun jinren guanyu songci yanjiu yixie pianxiang” [On Some Orientations in the Recent Studies on the Ci Poetry of the Song Dynasty], in *Jinian Gu Jiegang xueshu lunwen ji* [Collected Essays in Commemoration of Gu Jiegang’s Scholarship] [Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 1990], 802). I think that Chen Xun’s *shangchun* (lament for spring) is more precise.

24. Yang, *Wu Mengchuang ci jianshi*, 185–186.
25. Yang, *Wu Mengchuang ci jianshi*, 213–214.
26. Yang, *Wu Mengchuang ci jianshi*, 193–195.
27. Yang, *Wu Mengchuang ci jianshi*, 210–211.
28. Yang, *Wu Mengchuang ci jianshi*, 191.
29. Yang, *Wu Mengchuang ci jianshi*, 1–2.

30. Yang, *Wu Mengchuang ci jianshi*, 266–267.
31. Liu, *Weidishi shuo ci*, 60.
32. Yang, *Wu Mengchuang ci jianshi*, 192.
33. Chen, *Haixiao shuoci*, 9a.

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## ***Shi* Poetry**

### Ancient and Recent Styles

This chapter presents poems from both parts of the Song dynasty, the Northern Song (960–1127) and the Southern Song (1127–1279). The latter period began with the invasion of the **Jurchen** armies in the 1120s and the consequent withdrawal of the Chinese court to the south and loss of the northern half of the empire to foreign rule. More important to our discussion than the military weakness of the Song, however, is the fact that it was during this period that book printing became widespread in China. Largely for that reason, the amount of writing that survives from the three hundred years of the Song surpasses by far that of any previous dynasty; probably it exceeds the total of all the previous dynasties. The amount of Song dynasty ***shi*** poetry is staggeringly large. Some 200,000 poems survive, composed by nearly 10,000 authors. (Quantitatively, at least, *shi* is the major Song poetic genre, dwarfing in size the younger and less prestigious form of the ***ci*** [song lyric].) Very few people can have read all of the *shi* corpus. The quantity of *shi* poetry produced is so daunting that it was not until the end of the twentieth century that anyone set about to collect all of it. It required a national effort by a team of dozens of scholars in China and ten years of editorial labor to complete the project: *Complete Shi Poetry of the Song* (*Quan Song shi*).<sup>1</sup>

The poetry of the preceding great dynastic period, the Tang, is by comparison more manageable and much better known. There has been a *Complete Shi Poetry of the Tang* (*Quan Tang shi*) since 1706—that is, for three hundred years—and it is less than one-quarter as voluminous.<sup>2</sup> The literary history and criticism of Tang poetry is well developed. The

serious study of Song poetry as a whole is still in its initial stages.

Nevertheless, it has long been fashionable, ever since the Song itself, for poets and critics to think of the poetry of the Song as stylistically distinct from that of the Tang, and to debate its merits relative to the earlier work. It was both the good fortune and a handicap for Song literati to live after the Tang, with all its achievements in literature. Whatever Song writers produced would inevitably be compared with that from the earlier great age of literary history, often unfavorably. But the high repute of Tang poetry also spurred Song writers to explore new modes of poetic expression, which give Song poetry its own distinctive feel. The innovations are many and go in several directions, some of them seemingly contradictory. They include increased attention to the mundane aspects of daily life, the expectation that poetic diction is not without precedent in earlier verse, the accommodation of a large amount of intellectual thought or content, and a shying away from the overt expression of highly wrought emotion. So distinct did the general tone of Song poetry come to be from its Tang counterpart that, in the later imperial periods, through the Ming and Qing, it became almost a necessity for poets and critics alike to declare a preference for *either* the Tang or the Song style, although the richness of both periods makes a strict dichotomy suspect, especially since the nature of the Song style is difficult to describe precisely.



I present in this chapter particularly well known Song dynasty poems—ones that are widely anthologized—and comment on aspects of them that are often taken as representative of Song poetic style.

### **C15.1**

#### **Small Plum Tree in a Garden in the Hills, No. 1**

- When all other flowers have fallen, it alone shows warmth and  
beauty
- 2 Taking charge of all romantic feeling in the small garden.  
Spare shadows slant across waters that are clear and shallow,
  - 4 Hidden fragrance hangs and drifts under a moon hazy and dim.  
The frosty bird wants to alight but steals a glance at it first,
  - 6 If powder-dabbed butterflies knew of it, their hearts would break.



Luckily, chanting poetic lines softly I'm able to befriend it,  
 8 No need for the singing girl's clappers or a golden goblet of wine.  
 [QSS 2:2.1217–1218]

								山園小梅	(shāng yuán xiǎo méi)
many	flowers	shake	fall	alone	warmth	beauty		衆芳搖落獨暄妍	(zhòng fāng yáo luò dú xuān yán)
occupy	fully	wind	emotions	toward	small	garden		占盡風情向小園	(zhàn jìn fēng qíng xiàng xiǎo yuán)
sparse	shadows	extend	slant	water	clear	shallow		疏影橫斜水清淺	(shū yǐng héng xié shuǐ qīng qiǎn)
hidden	fragrance	float	move	moon	brown	hazy		暗香浮動月黃昏	(àn xiāng fú dòng yuè huáng hūn)
frost	bird	want	descend	first	steal	look		霜禽欲下先偷眼	(shuāng qín yù xià xiān tōu yǎn)
powder	butterfly	if	know	ought to	break	soul		粉蝶如知合斷魂	(fěn dié rú zhī hé duàn hún)
lucky	have	soft	chanting	may	mutually	befriend		幸有微吟可相狎	(xìng yǒu wēi yín kě xiāng xiá)
not	necessary	sandalwood	clappers	share	golden	goblet		不須檀板共金樽	(bù xū tán bǎn gòng jīn zūn)

[Tonal pattern I, see p. 171]

This poem, by **Lin Bu** (967–1028), is a celebration of the quiet beauty of the plum blossom. It belongs to the category of works known as **yongwu shi** (poems on things), an important subgenre of Chinese poems (thematic table of contents 2.10). Poems on things seek to capture not just the appearance but the inner meaning and essence of their subjects. Many of the favorite subjects of such poems have special significance in Chinese culture, being perceived as embodiments of human attributes or values, or at least as reminders of them. The plum blossom certainly belongs to this group. The plum is the first of the flowering trees to blossom in the early spring. The Chinese spring begins on New Year's Day, which, by the lunar calendar, may fall anytime between late January and late February. It is not unusual, then, in much of China to have snowfall even after the plum tree has blossomed. Chinese painters are fond of depicting the delicate white of the plum blossom set against snow on the branches of the tree. As one of the “three friends of the cold season” (the other two are bamboo and pine), the plum has long been associated with a kind of delicate beauty that exists in, and despite, the harsh conditions surrounding it. The fact that the plum blossom eschews the showy color and heavy fragrances of other flowering trees has made it particularly beloved of the scholarly class, which sees it as representative of the austerity and self-restraint that are scholarly ideals.

Lin Bu's poem stresses several characteristics of the blossoms for which they are generally admired. They are singular, appearing at an inhospitable time of year that has laid waste to other floral beauty;

moreover, despite the season, their delicate beauty is suggestive of warmth and romance (lines 1–2). Their appearance, however, is not that of luxuriance or intoxicating beauty; the branches are characterized as “spare,” and the aroma the blossoms emit is similarly subtle (lines 3–4). This second couplet is the one that has made the poem famous, evoking as it does the beauty of its subject by deflecting attention to related images (the shadows lying on the surface of clear waters, the aroma drifting in the air, the distant moon in the sky). The blossoms’ feminine allure is such that the bird flying above cannot resist stealing a look at them; and if the butterflies (frequent figures for male lovers who dally with “flowers”) realized that the plum had already blossomed, they would be smitten by its beauty (lines 5–6). Both bird and butterflies, moreover, are marked by a whiteness that matches that of the blossoms. So demure and elegant are the blossoms, in fact, that they represent an entirely different sort of feminine company from that of the professional entertainer, with her music making and wine serving (lines 7–8). We are meant to understand that such pleasures would be lowly in comparison with those brought by viewing the plum blossoms.

Lin Bu is an example of a minor poet who wrote certain poems that had a major impact on literary, and even cultural, history. Because of “Small Plum Tree in a Garden in the Hills, No. 1,” and a handful of other poems that he composed on the same subject, Lin Bu came to be viewed as the patriarch of plum blossom poetry in the Song and later dynasties. Soon, his influence spread beyond literature, as the subject of the plum blossom was taken up by artists and became a staple of the so-called bird-and-flower division of Chinese painting. Plum blossom painting reached its most refined stage with the development of the “ink plum” tradition, in which the real blossom’s avoidance of color was mimicked by the artist’s technique of painting the flower using only black ink—outlining the form with ink on a white background. By the early Southern Song, ink plum painting had turned into something of a cult among literati painters, who competed to produce more and more delicate and ingenious images of the flower’s austere beauty. Ink plum paintings, together with poems about either the natural plant or the artists’ rendering of it, came to be produced by the thousands, for the image had become a symbol of literati ideals, inseparable from the self-image of the men who created it. In this highly anthropomorphized conception, the plum blossom embodied one aspect of the aesthetic and cultural ideals of the period.<sup>3</sup>

Lin Bu’s poem also brings to mind another innovation of Song literary

culture, which was the creation of a new form of poetry criticism, known as “remarks on poetry” (*shihua*). This was a compilation of short critical observations about poetic lines, evaluating their technique and merits. This form of poetic connoisseurship had its origins in the witty literary conversations among educated persons of the time that eventually were written down. Lin Bu’s poem is discussed in several Song-period remarks on poetry, as critics expressed their appreciation for the second couplet, for example, or debated its merits relative to other couplets on the same subject. Following is an example of one such entry:

When Wang Junqing was in Yangzhou, he met with Sun Chenyuan and Su Zizhan [Su Dongpo]. As Junqing set out wine for the others, he remarked, “‘Spare shadows slant across waters that are clear and shallow, / Hidden fragrance hangs and drifts under a moon hazy and dim.’ This is from Lin Hejing’s [Lin Bu’s] plum blossom poem. Yet these lines might just as well be applied to the flowering apricot, peach, or pear.” Dongpo replied, “Well, yes, they might. But I’m afraid the flowers of those other trees wouldn’t presume to accept such praise.” Everyone present laughed.<sup>4</sup>

## **C15.2**

### **Lament for My Wife**

NO. 1		悼亡 其一	( <i>dào wáng qí yī</i> )
	Since we tied up our hair to be husband and wife	結髮為夫婦	( <i>jié fà wéi fū fù</i> )
2	Seventeen years have passed.	於今十七年	( <i>yú jīn shí qī nián</i> )
	Living with her, I could never look at her enough,	相看猶不足	( <i>xiāng kàn yóu bù zú</i> )
4	What now, that she is lost to me forever?	何況是長捐	( <i>hé kuàng shì cháng juān</i> )
	My hair by my temples already has much white in it	我鬢已多白	( <i>wǒ bìn yǐ duō bái</i> )
6	How long will my own body remain intact?	此身寧久全	( <i>cǐ shēn níng jiǔ quán</i> )
	In the end I will share a grave with her,	終當與同穴	( <i>zhōng dāng yǔ tóng xué</i> )
8	Not dead yet, my tears flow endlessly.	未死淚漣漣	( <i>wèi sǐ lèi lián lián</i> )
NO. 2		其二	( <i>qí èr</i> )
	Whenever I go out, it is like I'm in a dream,	每出身如夢	( <i>měi chū shēn rú mèng</i> )
2	Meeting people, I must force myself to be sociable.	逢人強意多	( <i>féng rén qiǎng yì duō</i> )
	I come home and am as lonely as before,	歸來仍寂寞	( <i>guī lái réng jì mò</i> )
4	I want to talk, but who is there?	欲語向誰何	( <i>yù yǔ xiàng shéi hé</i> )
	Through a cold window a firefly enters,	窗冷孤螢入	( <i>chuāng lěng gū yíng rù</i> )
6	In the long night a single goose flies past.	宵長一雁過	( <i>xiāo cháng yí yàn guò</i> )
	In this life there is no greater grief,	世間無最苦	( <i>shì jiān wú zuì kǔ</i> )
8	It grinds away at my spirit.	精爽此銷磨	( <i>jīng shuǎng cǐ xiāo mó</i> )
NO. 3		其三	( <i>qí sān</i> )
	There has always been the long and short-lived,	從來有脩短	( <i>cóng lái yǒu xiū duǎn</i> )
2	Who would dare ask azure heaven to explain?	豈敢問蒼天	( <i>qǐ gǎn wèn cāng tiān</i> )
	I've seen all other men's wives,	見盡人間婦	( <i>jiàn jìn rén jiān fù</i> )
4	None is as beautiful and good as she.	無如美且賢	( <i>wú rú měi qiě xián</i> )
	All those dull people who live to old age,	譬令愚者壽	( <i>pì lìng yú zhě shòu</i> )
6	Why couldn't she borrow some of their years?	何不假其年	( <i>hé bù jiǎ qí nián</i> )
	How could such a treasure worth several cities	忍此連城寶	( <i>rěn cǐ lián chéng bǎo</i> )
8	Be buried in the underworld of the Nine Springs?	沉埋向九泉	( <i>chén mái xiàng jiǔ quán</i> )

[QSS 5:14.2837–2838]

**Mei Yaochen** (1002–1069), the author of this series of three poems, is known for having broadened the subject matter of poetry to include topics that had been viewed as too mundane and “common” to be fit for poetic treatment. He is also known for having cultivated a plain style of language, relatively free from ornament or literary pretension, that compliments the types of subjects he often wrote about.

The poetic series, consisting of at least two poems and sometimes running up to one hundred, is quite common in Chinese verse. Surely one reason poets used it is that most verse forms in Chinese are short (eight lines or fewer) and preclude treating a subject from more than a single perspective. The series allowed the poet to do so. In “Lament for

My Wife,” Mei Yaochen took advantage of this feature of the series. Each poem has its own focus. The first presents the essential facts of the tragedy that has befallen him, and his thoughts move from his wife’s untimely death (she was thirty-seven and had been married to him, as he tells us, for seventeen years) to his own mortality. The second poem centers on his loneliness now that she is gone. In fact, Mei Yaochen and his family were traveling by boat from his provincial assignment back to the capital when his wife fell ill and died. One of Mei Yaochen’s sons died shortly thereafter, presumably of the same sickness. In the third poem, the poet reflects on the seeming unfairness of her fate. Having opened with the thought that it is pointless to ask heaven why some die young and others live long, Mei Yaochen proceeds to do just that. Obviously, he is still unreconciled to her death and cannot get over the feeling that it should not have happened. The “treasure” referred to in line 7 is the famous jade disk fashioned by Bian He (ca. sixth century B.C.E.) in ancient times. The jade was so coveted by the king of Qin that he offered fifteen cities for it to the king of the neighboring state of Zhao.

When Mei Yaochen wrote this series of poems on his wife’s death, he was doing something that earlier poets had done. The best-known precedents are those by Pan Yue (247–300), included in the influential sixth-century anthology *Wen xuan* (*Anthology of Refined Literature*), and Yuan Zhen (779–831), and it is instructive to read Mei Yaochen’s poems against those earlier works. Both Pan Yue and Yuan Zhen had waited for some time before writing their laments. Pan Yue’s poems are said to have been written a year after the death of his wife; Yuan Zhen’s are thought to have been written several years following his wife’s death. Both earlier series have a degree of formality and distance from the immediate grief of the death that are not found in Mei Yaochen’s poems. The earlier poems are highly literary and polished, mixing historical allusions to renowned women of virtue with references to articles the deceased wife has left behind (for example, her clothes, her sewing needles) and conventional observations about her thrift and contentment with modest circumstances. Mei Yaochen avoids these devices. The language of his poems is disarmingly simple, and many of his statements are surprisingly direct. Many of his lines (3–4 in the third poem) are so straightforward that they would be completely out of place in the earlier works. Finally, Mei Yaochen is not content merely to express sadness at his loss. He presents a portrait of a man who cannot accept or cope with his loss. He is writing very close to the event itself, in the initial stages of

trying to get control of his grief.

### C15.3

#### Seeing Off Canliao

- A monk studies suffering and emptiness  
2 The myriad worries are cold ashes in his mind.  
Blowing on a sword tip yields but a soft hum,  
4 Burned millet puts forth no new grain.  
How could you chase after our kind of man  
6 Striving to produce brilliantly patterned writing?  
Your recent poems are like chips of jade  
8 Their phrases fresh and surprising.  
Tuizhi said that draft-script calligraphy  
10 Is capable of reflecting any worldly affair.  
Worry, sadness, and all other disquietudes  
12 May be lodged in the darting of the brush.  
But he wondered about the Buddhist monk  
14 Who looks upon his body as an empty well.  
Meekly, he gives himself to the placid and plain,  
16 Who will elicit boldness and fury from him?  
When I reconsider this I see it is incorrect.  
18 True ingenuity is not a matter of delusion.  
If you want your poetic phrases to be marvelous  
20 Do not be averse to emptiness and quietude.  
With quietude you comprehend all movement,  
22 With emptiness you take in ten thousand scenes.  
You observe the world as you go among men,  
24 You examine yourself resting on a cloudy peak.  
The salty and sour mix with ordinary tastes,  
26 Between them there is a perfect flavor that endures.  
Poetry and Buddhism are not incompatible,  
28 I submit this view for your consideration.

- 送參寥詩 (sòng cān liáo shī)  
上人學苦空 (shàng rén xué kǔ kōng)  
百念已灰冷 (bǎi niàn yǐ huī lěng)  
劍頭惟一吷 (jiàn tóu wéi yí xuè)  
焦穀無新穎 (jiāo gǔ wú xīn yǐng)  
胡為逐吾輩 (hú wéi zhú wú bèi)  
文字爭蔚炳 (wén zì zhēng wèi bǐng)  
新詩如玉屑 (xīn shī rú yù xiè)  
出語便清警 (chū yǔ biàn qīng jǐng)  
退之論草書 (tuì zhī lùn cǎo shū)  
萬事未嘗屏 (wàn shì wèi cháng bǐng)  
憂愁不平氣 (yōu chóu bù píng qì)  
一寓筆所馳 (yí yù bǐ suǒ chěng)  
頗怪浮屠人 (pō guài fú tú rén)  
視身如丘井 (shì shēn rú qiū jǐng)  
頽然寄淡泊 (tuí rán jì dàn bó)  
誰與發豪猛 (shéi yǔ fā gāo měng)  
細思乃不然 (xì sī nǎi bù rán)  
真巧非幻影 (zhēn qiǎo fēi huàn yǐng)  
欲令詩語妙 (yù lìng shī yǔ miào)  
無厭空且靜 (wú yàn kōng qiě jìng)  
靜故了羣動 (jìng gù liǎo qún dòng)  
空故納萬境 (kōng gù nà wàn jìng)  
閱世走人間 (yuè shì zǒu rén jiān)  
觀身臥雲嶺 (guān shēn wò yún líng)  
鹹酸雜衆好 (xián suān zá zhòng hǎo)  
中有至味永 (zhōng yǒu zhì wèi yǒng)  
詩法不相妨 (shī fǎ bù xiāng fāng)  
此語更當請 (cǐ yǔ gèng dāng qǐng)

[QSS 14:17.9273; SSSJ 17.905–907]

The author of this poem, **Su Shi** (1037–1101, also known as Su Dongpo, as we saw earlier), was the greatest literary talent of the Northern Song period. Canliao (1043–ca. 1116) was one of the several Buddhist monks he befriended. Canliao was a poet as well as a monk; indeed, he was known for writing poetry that took leave of the Buddhist style of quietist, meditative verse (thematic table of contents 1.3) and was quite indistinguishable from that the scholar-literati (such as Su Shi) produced

(which accounts for what Su Shi writes in lines 5–8). There are different ways of interpreting the personal aspect of what Su Shi is saying in this poem. Oddly enough, one plausible reading is that Su Shi is counseling his friend to be *more* like a monk when he composes verse, that he need not feel compelled to ape the manner of the poet who is prey to uncontrollable emotions.

The poem opens with a description of monk-related ideals (lines 1–4). His mind should be empty—that is, free from the anxieties that trouble ordinary men. Unlike a wind instrument, a sword tip does not sing out when blown on, nor does a charred stalk of millet continue to produce seed. The monk should be similarly unexpressive. Su Shi then refers to the way that Canliao’s poetry departs from these monkish expectations (lines 5–8). The next section of the poem (lines 9–16) summarizes an essay that Han Yu (788–824), the great Tang writer and statesman, had addressed to a Buddhist monk named Gaoxian (fl. ninth century). Gaoxian was an aspiring calligrapher, but Han Yu held out little hope that he would ever excel at the art. Han Yu’s reasoning was that for a calligrapher to produce remarkable art—especially one who specialized, as Gaoxian did, in the unrestrained draft-script style—his work had to spring from strong emotions. As a monk, Gaoxian worked at emptying himself of attachments and the feelings that they bring, so there was little hope for him as a calligrapher. At the end of his essay, Han Yu moderates his pessimistic prediction somewhat, adding that since Buddhists are known to be good at magic and illusion, Gaoxian may achieve some success despite his inherent disadvantage. This is the statement that Su Shi takes issue with in line 18.

The final section of Su Shi’s poem (lines 17–28) presents a theory of artistic creativity that is an alternative to that which Han Yu had offered. The fact that Han Yu was talking about calligraphy and Su Shi about poetry counts for little. What is at issue is the inspiration and orientation of the artist, whatever artistic form he chooses. Su Shi insists that the Buddhist’s “emptiness and quietude” may also serve artistic ends. He does not rule out the art of powerful emotions; he simply suggests that there is another mode of artistic creativity. He even explains the contribution that emptiness and quietude may make to the artistic temperament. They allow the artist to dispassionately observe the world around him, to “take in” all manner of worldly events, and they permit accurate self-reflection (lines 21–24). The “flavor” that this mental attitude corresponds to is not one of the standard ones (line 26); it is a perfect

balance of them all, a “flavorless” flavor that makes all others seem partial and imbalanced. It is precisely the “placid and plain” (*danbo*, or, more commonly, *pingdan*) (line 15), superior and “truer” than all the rest, that Han Yu had mistaken for insipidness.

There is a discursive tendency in much of Song poetry that is exemplified in “Seeing Off Canliao.” When critics characterize Song poetry as “intellectual” or “philosophical,” it is this trait they have in mind. There is a surprising amount of argumentation in a poem such as this, as Su Shi summarizes one theory of creativity, only to disagree with it and present another.

Here we have a poem whose very point nicely complements the discursive mode of presentation, an “intellectual” poem that sets the intellect in opposition to the emotions. Song-period aesthetics also generally elevates the quality of the “placid and plain” to be a supreme artistic ideal. In this poem, we see the connection between that quality and intellectuality or thoughtfulness, and we also see it as an alternative to the Tang theory of the art of powerful emotions. The mind that achieves *pingdan* has an enhanced ability to be reflective because it is not encumbered by, or a slave to, heartfelt subjective feelings. There is a certain detachment to this ideal. Obviously, this cluster of qualities is eminently compatible with Buddhist teachings and surely owes much to their influence.

#### **C15.4**

##### **Written on Master Huyin’s Wall, No. 1**

The entry beneath thatch-roof eaves, often swept,  
is clean and free of moss.

Flowering trees grow neatly in rows,  
he planted them with his own hands.

A single river guards the fields,  
encircling them in a band of emerald,

Two mountains shove open the doorway,  
sending their green inside.

[QSS 10:29.6700; WJGSZBJ 43.822]



							書湖陰先生壁	(shū hú yīn xiān shēng bì)
thatch	eaves	constantly	sweep	clean	no	moss	茅簷長掃淨無苔	(máo yán cháng sǎo jìng wú tái)
flowering	trees	form	rows	hand	oneself	plant	花木成畦手自栽	(huā mù chéng qí shǒu zì zāi)
one	river	guard	field	takes	green	round	一水護田將綠繞	(yì shuǐ hù tián jiāng lǜ rào)
two	mountains	open	doorway	send	green	come	兩山排闥送青來	(liǎng shān pái tà sòng qīng lái)

[Tonal pattern 1a, see p. 171]

The heptasyllabic line often contains, in effect, two separated but related statements—for example, “The entry beneath [the] thatch-roof eaves [is] often swept,” and “[consequently the ground] is clean [there] and free of moss” (line 1). The line breaks in the translation reflect this two-part structure of the lines in this poem by Wang Anshi (1021–1086).

Master Huyin (literally, South of the Lake) is Yang Defeng (fl. 1080), who was Wang Anshi’s neighbor when he lived in retirement in the mountains outside Jinling (Nanjing). The title, “Written on Master Huyin’s Wall, No. 1,” tells us that this poem was one that the poet inscribed on the wall of his neighbor’s house. To understand this practice, which was not unusual, we must understand that the original inscription would have been valued as much for the author’s calligraphy, seen as the embodiment of his personality and learning, as for the language and meaning of the poem itself. Wang Anshi had served for many years as grand councillor, the highest official in the empire, and had persuaded the emperor to embark on an ambitious and controversial program of reforms. By the time he wrote this poem, he had retired from service and was living more or less in seclusion in the mountains. In all likelihood, Yang Defeng had invited his famous neighbor to compose a poem and inscribe it on his wall. Having been asked, Wang Anshi obliged with a composition that fulfills the social nature of the occasion by complimenting the neighbor on his residence and his way of life.

The opening two lines of the poem emphasize the care that Yang Defeng takes to ensure that his residence is well kept. There is nothing growing where it should not be, and what is growing is not just said to be neatly arranged; it was personally planted by the head of the household. All this speaks to Yang Defeng’s fastidiousness, thrift, and diligence. The opening lines are decorous and polite, but they are not remarkable. If the entire poem was made up of such lines, it would not have attracted critical attention.

The closing two lines are a different matter. They contain pointed borrowings of phrases from Han dynasty historical writings, ingeniously

pressed into service in a way that makes literal sense in each line of the poem. The word *hutian* (line 3) derives in a complex way from language used to describe the establishment of state farms (*tuntian*) in the western borderlands of the Han empire. The farms were set up in unpopulated areas and run by soldiers who were garrisoned there. Aside from providing food for the troops, the farms effectively created a buffer zone between the agrarian areas of the interior and the lands of the nomadic tribes outside the Chinese border. The language of the *Han shu* (*History of the Han Dynasty*) and its Tang commentary is this: “From Dunhuang west to Salt Marsh, way stations were established intermittently. Several hundred ‘field soldiers’ were stationed at Luntai and Quli. Commissioners and commandants were installed to supervise and guard them.”<sup>5</sup> The commentary, explaining the function of the officials referred to in the closing sentence, says, “They supervised and guarded the cultivation of fields.” It is noteworthy that neither the *History of the Han Dynasty* passage nor the commentary on it actually uses the phrase *hutian* (to guard the fields), which occurs in line 3 of the poem. Both sources use the two words but do not join them directly together. Still, the association of the two words in these early texts is felt to be close enough to establish a precedent for their later use, together, as a covert allusion.

The language appropriated in line 4 of the poem is an actual phrase, drawn also from a passage in the *History of the Han Dynasty* (also found in the parallel chapter in the *Shiji* [*Records of the Grand Scribe*], an earlier text).<sup>6</sup> Some years after Emperor Gaozu (**Han Gaozu**, r. 206–194 B.C.E.) founded the Han dynasty, one of his generals, Ying Bu (d. 196 B.C.E.), revolted. Gaozu was seriously ill at the time and secluded himself in the palace, attended by only a single eunuch. Gaozu gave orders that no one else be allowed to come to him. Other of his ministers abided by the emperor’s wishes, but the impetuous Fan Kuai (d. 189 B.C.E.) could not tolerate the prospect of being separated from his lord in his time of need. Fan Kuai went up to the room where Gaozu was staying and “burst open the door and went straight in” (*pai ta zhi ru*). Gaozu’s self-isolation was thus ended, and the emperor quickly recovered.

Allusion is a very common device in Chinese poetry, and it exists in many different types and degrees of reference to the earlier text(s). Sometimes the language of an allusion does not make sense in the line it appears in unless the allusion is recognized and the relevance of the source passage accurately perceived. That is not the case with Wang Anshi’s two allusions. The lines make perfectly good sense even if the

reader misses the fact that the two phrases are drawn from earlier texts. The reader will still perceive that the lines present clever matching personifications: the river “guards the fields,” and the two mountains “shove [or burst] open the doorway” to deliver their image of greenery inside. But, of course, the cleverness is enhanced if the allusions are recognized. First, recognition creates a new layer of communication between poet and reader, the latter now understanding that he has espied a tidbit of meaning deliberately secluded in the poetic line; his discovery likewise shows that, in this instance at least, his erudition lives up to the poet’s expectations about his readers. Poet and reader now share a secret about the line that less-informed readers will miss. Second, the phrases that constitute the allusions are seen to be all the more ingenious because the personification aspect of both of them is the poet’s special addition to the earlier phrase. Originally, there was no personification involved. The supervising officers were literally appointed to guard (or oversee) the soldiers in the agricultural colonies. Similarly, Fan Kuai literally burst through the door to get access to his ailing ruler. Wang Anshi’s appropriation of these unremarkable earlier uses and transformation of them by making the grammatical subject of each inanimate—indeed, each a part of the landscape—is an instance of the poetic ideal, first identified in his own age, of “touching iron and transforming it into gold” (*diantie chengjin*), an ideal inspired by the alchemist’s alleged ability to change ordinary metals into life-sustaining gold.

### **C15.5**

#### **As Dawn Approached on an Autumn Night, I Went Out My Bramble Gate and, Met by Chilly Air, Was Moved to Write This, No. 2**

Across ten thousand miles the Yellow River  
flows eastward into the sea,  
Rising five thousand fathoms Hua Mountain  
brushes against the heavens.  
Our former dynasty’s subjects have used up their tears  
amid barbarian dust,  
As southward they look for the imperial army,  
another year has passed!

[QSS 39:25.24780; JNSGJZ 25.1774]

					秋夜將曉, 出籬門迎涼有感 (qiū yè jiāng xiǎo, chū lí mén yíng liáng yǒu gǎn)
three	ten thousand miles	Yellow River	eastward	enter sea	三萬里河東入海 (sān wàn lǐ hé dōng rù hǎi)
five	thousand	fathoms	sacred mountain	upward rub	五千仞嶽上摩天 (wǔ qiān rèn yuè shàng mó tiān)
residual	people	tears	use up	barbarian dust	遺民淚盡胡塵裏 (yí mín lèi jìn hú chén lǐ)
inside				another one year	南望王師又一年 (nán wàng wáng shī yòu yī nián)

[Tonal pattern II, see p. 170]

Lu You (1125–1209), who composed this poem, was but one year old when the Jurchen armies invaded the Song empire from the northeast; sacked the capital, Bianliang (Kaifeng); and captured the reigning emperor (**Qinzong**, r. 1125–1126) and his father (**Huizong**, r. 1100–1125) and took them and other members of the imperial family back north as prisoners. This was not a temporary national humiliation. The new emperor retreated to the south of the Yangtze River and eventually established a new capital at Lin'an (present-day Hangzhou). The Southern Song eventually concluded a peace treaty with the invaders that effectively ceded to them the cultural heartland of the Yellow River plain, where the Chinese capitals had always been located. The Southern Song would never regain the north, although during Lu You's lifetime there were periodic calls from frustrated statesmen to attempt to do just that. The effect of the disaster of 1126 lasted until a greater one struck in the 1270s, when Khublai Khan (d. 1294) sent his armies against the Southern Song. By conquering the dynasty, he completed the Mongol conquest of the great eastern empires (the Western Liao, Xi Xia, and Jin), which his grandfather Genghis (ca. 1167–1227) and his uncle Ögödei (d. 1241) had begun, consolidating control over the entirety (and more) of the lands that had once been under Chinese control. It would be another hundred years before the Chinese rose up and put an end to the Mongol Yuan dynasty. The invasion of 1126 thus marked the start of two and a half centuries of foreign domination of northern China.

When Emperor Gaozong (r. 1127–1163) fled south across the Yangtze in 1127, hundreds of thousands of people—officials, their families, and virtually anyone else who could manage to leave the north—followed suit. But millions of their countrymen were left to face the invaders and their new life under Jurchen rule. (The population of the Song state in 1100 is

estimated to have been 100 million, larger than that of all of Europe.) These people were referred to as *yimin* (people who lived under a former dynasty), the term used in line 3 of Lu You's poem and, in Chinese historical writing, one designating people whose lives outlast the dynasty they were born under, especially if they remain loyal to the defunct power. *Yimin* are always viewed as unfortunate; those who happen to find themselves ruled by a foreign conqueror are considered particularly ill-fated.

Lu You's own politics were distinctly irredentist. He was a lifelong advocate of the reconquest of the north. Two common themes in his enormous collection of poetry (running to some 10,000 pieces) are criticism of the so-called peace policy that prevailed at the Southern Song court and expressions of sympathy for his countrymen of the north. Lu You even went so far as to align himself with the generally disliked grand councillor Han Tuozhou (1151–1207), who sponsored an unsuccessful military campaign against the Jurchens in 1206.

The quatrain "As Dawn Approached on an Autumn Night, No. 2," was written in 1192, when Lu You was living in retirement in northern Zhejiang but still, clearly, thinking of national politics. The opening words of the title seem to imply that the poet has been awake all night, brooding perhaps on his nation's plight. The cold air that greets him as he steps outside seems to have a dual effect: it reminds him on that autumn morning that the year is moving toward its end (anticipating the thought in line 4), and it probably serves to set him thinking about his countryman in the north, where the weather is colder still.

The opening two parallel lines present images of the two most noteworthy features of the northern landscape: the Yellow River and Hua Mountain. The latter is the westernmost and culturally most important of China's five sacred mountains (*wuyue*).<sup>7</sup> Overlooking the Yellow River, Hua Mountain is located between the ancient capitals of Luoyang and Chang'an. Owing to the proximity of Hua Mountain to the ancient centers of Chinese civilization, since the earliest times "Hua" has been synonymous with "China" and the "Chinese people," and even today the syllable is present in the official designation of the country. The irony of the opening lines is that these grand and timeless symbols of the nation, the Yellow River and Hua Mountain, are no longer under Chinese control. The poet can only imagine them; he cannot actually gaze on them. By specifying the length of the river in line 1, the poet indirectly reminds us of the expanse of the Chinese territory now under Jurchen rule. (Although

the line actually says “thirty thousand miles,” I have changed it to “ten thousand” in the translation—still hyperbolic but more accurate, given that the Chinese mile was equivalent to roughly one-third the English mile.)

Line 3 identifies the problem that the former people of the Song dynasty now find themselves in, standing “amid barbarian dust,” even though they live along the banks of the Yellow River and in the shadow of Hua Mountain. No tears left, all they can do is look southward for the Chinese army that never comes to liberate them and regain what to Lu You was territory that never should have been formally ceded. The north had already been an alien regime for over sixty years, but Lu You wants us to think that every additional year is still greeted with despair by those who await relief.

The following poem, also by Lu You, presents a completely different mood and theme:

### **C15.6**

#### **An Outing to Villages West of the Mountains**

- Don't laugh at the peasant's winter wine for being murky,  
2 In abundant years there are enough chickens and pigs to entertain a guest.  
The mountains are chaotic, the river doubles back and forth, as if there's no way through,  
4 Dark green are the willows, bright the blossoms, as one more village comes into view.  
Groups of pipe players and drummers follow each other, Spring Festival must be approaching,  
6 Simple and rustic are the villagers' caps and clothes, preserving the flavor of ancient times.  
If you allow me to visit when I have leisure, taking advantage of a full moon,  
8 I'll lean on my staff and knock on your door whenever I can.

[QSS 39:1.24272; *JNSGJZ* 1.102]

遊山西村 (yóu shān xī cūn)

don't	laugh	farmers	family	winter	wine	murky	莫笑農家臘酒渾	(mò xiào nóng jiā là jiǔ hún)
abundant	years	detain	guest	enough	chickens	pigs	豐年留客足鵝豚	(fēng nián liú kè zú jī tún)
mountains	dense	river	doubling	suspect	no	road	山重水複疑無路	(shān chóng shuǐ fù yí wú lù)
willows	dark	blossoms	bright	again	one	village	柳暗花明又一村	(liǔ àn huā míng yòu yī cūn)
pipes	drums	pursue	follow	Spring	Festival	near	簫鼓追隨春社近	(xiāo gǔ zhuī suí chūn shè jìn)
clothes	caps	simple	rustic	ancient	style	preserved	衣冠簡朴古風存	(yī guān jiǎn pǔ gǔ fēng cún)
from	today	if	allow	leisure	take advantage	moon	從今若許閑乘月	(cóng jīn ruò xǔ xián chéng yuè)
lean on	staff	no	set time	night	knock	door	拄杖無時夜扣門	(zhǔ zhàng wú shí yè kòu mén)

[Tonal pattern 11a, see p. 172]

This poem was written in 1167, when Lu You was living at home. He had returned home the year before, having fallen into official disgrace for his support of a military campaign against the northern Jin (acting on the same sentiments as those featured in “As Dawn Approached on an Autumn Night, No. 2”) that ended disastrously for the Song army. It was four years before Lu You was reinstated as an official. As we can tell from the title, the poem was occasioned by a visit Lu You paid early that spring to the mountainous countryside outside his hometown.

Starting with the opening line, the poet takes the side of the rustic peasants he walks among, some of whom evidently invite him into their homes and treat him to food and wine. They take in this stranger, and he, reciprocating, writes about their world with a sympathetic eye (not that they could have read what he wrote). The poet’s attention really is focused on the rural domain he has entered. We note that the two middle couplets wholly concern the landscape he passes through and the peasant ways he finds there. Unlike so much regulated verse of the Tang period, these key couplets of parallel lines do not seek to present a fusion of the poet’s personal life and feelings with the sights before him (thematic table of contents 5.1). Lu You is content to leave himself largely out of the picture he conveys. Consequently, we sense his curiosity about a way of life that has little connection with his own and his reluctance to say anything about himself other than to convey his appreciation of this other way of life.

Lines 2 and 3 are particularly celebrated. There are poetic precedents for such lines—the sudden discovery of a path or an opening when none had seemed possible—but not any that are as ingenious and effectively constructed as Lu You’s, featuring a contrast between massive landscape forms (mountains, river) and tiny dots of colored vegetation that

somehow point the traveler to a “way through.” But there is more. I spoke earlier about the “intellectuality” of Song poetry. Many critics through the ages, from Lu You’s own time down to the present, have interpreted these lines abstractly, as evoking a “truth” or “principle” (*li*) concerning the existence of solutions to seemingly insurmountable difficulties if only we have the persistence to keep looking for an answer. Here we glimpse again the prevalence of the intellectual or even philosophical element embedded in Song poetry. Is it possible that Lu You did not intend such a secondary meaning when he wrote the lines? Yes, it is possible. But the fact remains that he constructed the lines in such a way that they lend themselves to this interpretation, as we see in the remarks of knowledgeable and responsible critics.

One might wonder about the relationship between “An Outing to Villages West of the Mountains” and “As Dawn Approached on an Autumn Night, No. 2.” How could the same writer use the poetic form for such different types of expressions, showing himself to be distraught in the preceding poem over the plight of his nation and caring only, in this poem, for simple rustic life? It is not necessarily that Lu You changed his outlook from one period of his life to another. To answer the question, we must understand the role of poetry in Lu You’s life. During his long span of eighty-four years, Lu You composed nearly 10,000 poems. Poetry was to him a medium for giving shape to innumerable moments of thought and feeling that he experienced, as it was for many Chinese poets. There is hardly anything definitive about any one of these moments or the poem that corresponds to it. It is pointless to try to ascertain which of the two voices we find in these poems is the more genuine or representative of the essential Lu You. Both are equally part of him, as are countless other moods and themes he wrote about. It is only by reading hundreds or (in Lu You’s case) thousands of poems by the same Chinese poet that we slowly develop a sense of what is important to him and how he reacts to events and views his world. That is when we begin to get to know him as a writer and perceive his uniqueness, his distinctive traits. But all the major poets, and Lu You is certainly one of them, will display to us through their collected works a range of emotions and viewpoints. That range may be astonishingly broad and may well encompass apparent contradictions between individual works.

We find a similar focus on rural life in the following poems by Lu You’s contemporary **Fan Chengda** (1126–1193), but with a different tone:



### C15.7

#### Fields and Gardens Through the Four Seasons, Random Inspirations: Spring, No. 10

To plant a garden and get it to produce,  
the worry matches the labor.  
He cannot stand the thought of little boys  
and sparrows diminishing it.  
He has already stuck thorns in the ground  
to protect the bamboo shoots,  
Now he spreads out a fish net  
to cover the cherry trees.

[QSS 41:27.26002]

							四時田園雜興, 春	(sì shí tián yuán zá xìng, chūn)
plant	garden	obtain	produce	worry	equals	labor	種園得果座償勞	(zhòng yuán dé guǒ zuò cháng láo)
cannot	stand	son	boy	bird	sparrow	harm	不奈兒童鳥雀搔	(bú nài ér tóng niǎo què sāo)
already	stick	bramble	needles	protect	bamboo shoot	path	已插棘針樊筍徑	(yǐ chā jī zhēn fán sūn jìng)
also	spread	fish	net	cover	cherry	cherry	更鋪漁網蓋櫻桃	(gèng pū yú wǎng gài yīng táo)

[Tonal pattern 1a, see p. 171]

### C15.8

#### Summer, No. 34

In a lotus patch a thousand acres across  
she goes boating for fun,  
The flowers are so dense she loses her way,  
and fails to come home at dusk.  
Her family can discern indirectly  
where her boat is,  
Now and then she paddles anxiously,  
small ducks rise up in flight.

[QSS 41:27.26004]

							四時田園雜興, 夏	(sì shí tián yuán zá xìng, xià)
thousand	acres	lotus	lotus	set loose	boat	fun	千頃芙蕖放棹嬉	(qiān qīng fú qú fàng zhào xī)
flowers	deep	lose	road	evening	forget	return	花深迷路晚忘歸	(huā shēn mí lù wǎn wàng guī)
family	persons	indirectly	perceive	boat	move	place	家人暗識船行處	(jiā rén àn shí chuán xíng chù)
occasionally	have	startle	busy	small	duck	fly	時有驚忙小鴨飛	(shí yǒu jīng máng xiǎo yā fēi)

[Tonal pattern IIa, see p. 171]

### C15.9

#### Autumn, No. 44

The clay on the newly made threshing ground  
is as flat as a mirror,  
Household after household threshes rice plants  
taking advantage of the clear frosty weather.  
Behind the singing and laughter  
faint thunder rumbles,  
All night the sounds of the flails  
echo until the sky turns light.

[QSS 41:27.26005]

							四時田園雜興, 秋	(sì shí tián yuán zá xìng, qiū)
newly	made	place	mud	mirror	face	level	新築場泥鏡面平	(xīn zhù chǎng ní jìng miàn píng)
family	family	thresh	rice	take advantage	frost	clear sky	家家打稻趁霜晴	(jiā jiā dǎ dào chèn shuāng qíng)
laughter	singing	sounds	within	faint	thunder	moves	笑歌聲裏輕雷動	(xiào gē shēng lǐ qīng léi dòng)
whole	night	flail	flail	echoes	reaching	bright	一夜連枷響到明	(yí yè lián jiā xiǎng dào míng)

[Tonal pattern IIa, see p. 171]

These three poems are from a set of sixty quatrains that Fan Chengda wrote about rural life outside his hometown in Pingjiang (near present-day Suzhou) that are among his most celebrated works. Fan Chengda is known for his detailed poetic depictions of life in the countryside, which have a focus and flavor all their own. As we see in these poems, he is capable of keeping silent about his own circumstances and emotions as he moves about the countryside. In a preface to the series, he tells us that he wrote it in his later years, when he had recovered enough from a period of illness to be able to visit his secluded dwelling in the countryside and, once there, stroll in the fields. He made poems out of what he saw. Fan Chengda's farmstead verse thus departs from the tradition of the countless earlier poets—for example, **Tao Qian** (365?–427)—who withdrew to the countryside to write about themselves in their rustic seclusion (thematic table of contents 2.8).

One immediately notices the acuteness of Fan Chengda's observation.

His poems show considerable knowledge about the actual work of the farmer, agricultural techniques, and peasant lore. They also show an interest in the lives of the peasants, who toiled endlessly in the fields. His portrait of rural life is a remarkably unromanticized one, noticeably less so than Lu You's in his poem "An Outing to Villages West of the Mountains." There may be laughter and singing while the families thresh the rice, but the work continues all through the night. The theme of the arduousness of farm life runs throughout the poems. It is exactly because, in "Spring, No. 10," so much toil has gone into his garden that its owner has no qualms about setting out thorns to greet the bare feet of small children who might be tempted to help themselves to the results of his labor.

Fan Chengda's refusal to sentimentalize the life of peasants around him shows itself in another conspicuous theme in his poems: the relentless struggle to meet the taxes that the government requires. Here is another poem from the same series that features it:

**C15.10**  
**Summer, No. 35**

Picking water chestnut is bitter work,  
the plow and hoe are useless.  
His bloody fingers ooze crimson,  
brittle and emaciated as a ghost.  
He has no means to purchase land  
so plants for now in water.  
But recently whatever comes from the lake  
is also subject to taxes.

[QSS 41:27.26004]

							四時田園雜興, 夏	(sì shí tián yuán zá xìng, xià)
pick	water chestnut	harsh	bitter	abandon	plow	hoe	采菱辛苦廢犁鋤	(cǎi líng xīn kǔ fèi lí chú)
bloody	fingers	flow	crimson	ghost	substance	withered	血指流丹鬼質枯	(xuè zhǐ liú dān guǐ zhì kū)
without	means	buy	fields	for now	plant	water	無力買田聊種水	(wú lì mǎi tián liáo zhòng shuǐ)
nearby	come	lake	surface	also	collect	taxes	近來湖面亦收租	(jìn lái hú miàn yì shōu zū)

[Tonal pattern 1a, see p. 171]

Several of the poems in the series depict the tax obligation as the overriding burden in the peasants' lives. Women stay up all night weaving

silk that will be used to help meet the tax obligation (no. 29). The grain that is finally harvested, with exhausting labor, is said to go half to pay outstanding debts and half to pay taxes (no. 41). In another poem, a peasant watches as the pure-white kernels of rice that he has harvested are transferred from his boat to the government granary and is glad to think that at least he has kept some of poorer quality, mixed with husks, to keep his children from going hungry (no. 45). The corruption of local officials is also broached in these poems, reference being made to the widespread practice of vastly undercounting the quantities of grain that the peasants submitted to meet their obligation (no. 45). The series also touches on distinctions of social class. One poem uses the Seventh Night Festival to present a contrast (no. 38). In wealthy households, the festival is marked with much gaiety, as the girls come out at night to beseech the Weaving Maid (*zhinü*) in the sky for skill in sewing. In the farmhouses, the doors are bolted at dusk—because everyone is too tired to stay up. The girls in those families already know how to sew, the poem observes, and the boys how to herd oxen. They have no time to celebrate the annual romance of the Weaving Maid and her celestial Herd Boy lover.

There is, of course, a long tradition of poetry that describes the hardships of the common people, even those caused by the very officials who are supposed to look after them. In Fan Chengda, we find this poetic mode taken to an unusual degree of specificity about the realities of peasant life that made it so onerous. This is a different manifestation, informed by social class and political consciousness, of the capacity for writing about the domestic and everyday aspects of experience that we glimpsed earlier in Mei Yaochen.

Ronald Egan

#### NOTES

1. *Quan Song shi (Complete Shi Poetry of the Song)*, 72 vols. (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1991–1998). The compilation runs to 45,698 pages, with, on average, four poems per page.

2. *Quan Tang shi (Complete Shi Poetry of the Tang)*, 25 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960).

3. The subject has been exhaustively and masterfully written about by Maggie Bickford, *Ink Plum: The Making of a Chinese Scholar-Painting Genre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

4. Wang Zhifang, *Wang Zhifang shihua (Poetry Talks of Wang Zhifang)*, no. 28, in *Song shihua quanbian (The Complete Collection of Poetry Talks of the Song Dynasty)*, ed. Wu Wenzhi (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1998), 2:1147.

5. Ban Gu, *Han shu (History of the Han Dynasty)* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 96A.3873.

6. Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 41.2072; Sima Qian, *Shiji (Records of the Grand Scribe)* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), 95.2659.

7. Most commentators assume that line 2 refers to Hua Mountain, rather than to any other of the sacred mountains or even, conceivably, all of them together, because of the frequent pairing of the Yellow River and Hua Mountain in Lu You's poetry, and because the height Lu You gives for the mountain matches that given for Hua Mountain in early writings.

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## **PART 6**

# **The Yuan, Ming, and Qing Dynasties**

## Qu Poetry

### Song Poems (*Sanqu*) of the Yuan Dynasty

During the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368), popular literature flourished. A new verse form, the ***sanqu*** (song poem), which had close ties with music and drama, became the most energetic poetic genre of the time.

The *sanqu* belongs to the tradition of song verse. Like the *ci*, *sanqu* originally were verses set to music. The tunes or the metrical patterns used in song poems, however, are different from those in the *ci*, because the *sanqu* tunes were nurtured by the music of a different time with special features of its own. To understand this, one need only note that the genre grew in the north. Its origin can be traced back at least to the folk songs, with their distinctive local color, that were popular in the Jin dynasty (1111–1234), when northern China was under the rule of the **Jurchens**. The genre came to full blossom in the Yuan dynasty under Mongol rule, which witnessed intense interaction between traditional Chinese culture and the cultures of the non-Han peoples from the north and west.

The typical language of song poems is the northern vernacular Chinese, with its vigorous colloquial flavor so characteristic of the genre. Although most of the songs written by the versifiers from the streets and entertainment quarters have been lost, and the great majority of the song poems handed down to us were actually works of literati poets, here and there in these poems the fresh and pungent idioms and the spicy and rambunctious humor, accompanied by a vivacious flow of everyday speech, unmistakably tell of the genre's origins. The following observation by a modern scholar, therefore, seems not far from the truth: "Unless a *chü* [*sanqu*] had at least a modicum of vulgar speech, it was

thought to be a less than satisfactory example of the genre.”<sup>1</sup>

The verse form of the song poems is basically the same as that of the arias in the *zaju*, the Yuan variety plays, which also developed in the north. The blood link between the two genres is evident from the name *sanqu* itself, which literally means “dispersed [dramatic] songs.” It comes as no surprise, then, that most of the Yuan playwrights were also masters of the song poem.

The Mongol rulers of the Yuan were not enthusiastic about traditional Chinese mores, nor were they promoters of serious literature. Ironically, their negligence of cultural affairs proved to be a blessing to the development of the song poem and other forms of popular literature. Writers felt less restricted by the traditional ethical code. Also, many scholars, well versed in the classics and literature but not able to—or reluctant to—join the civil service because of the political situation of the time, diverted their talent to the writing of song poems and variety plays.<sup>2</sup> The pluralistic style and the wide range of subject matter of the song poem well reflect the genre’s humble origins as well as the influences on the genre from the powerful poetic tradition of Chinese high literature. At one end of the spectrum are song poems dealing with the time-honored poetic topics so often found in the *shi* and the *ci*, like meditations on the past, reflections on seasonal changes, or celebration of the quiet life of a recluse; at the other are found witticisms, mockery, lighthearted parodies, and nonsensical jokes. However, love songs of various kinds, often cliché-ridden but sometimes enlivened by bold and witty expressions and graphic descriptions, outnumber songs of other categories.

## MUSIC AND PROSODY

The early song poems were really “song words” created to fit the music. As the tunes themselves got lost with the passage of time, only the word or verse formulas—the tune patterns, as they are called—remained, and the practice of *sanqu* writing became a matter of composing verses to fit the existing tune patterns. Each tune pattern belongs to a certain musical mode. The mode differs from the tune in that the latter can be defined as the metrical pattern informed with the melodic spirit of the music, whereas the former is the key or the tonality of the music, reflecting such values as the pitch and color of notes as well as their interval patterns, all of which were believed to have had a significant impact on the tone and mood of song poems in the early days of the genre, when they were



meant to be sung. The extant corpus of the nondramatic song poems includes more than two hundred tune patterns but only nine musical modes in common use. A considerable number of the tune patterns used in the composition of song poems are also found in the arias in the Yuan variety plays.

There are two forms of *sanqu*: the single song poem (*xiaoling*) and the song suite (*santao*). The single song could be expanded by a reprise or combined with one or two other single songs of different tunes to form a bigger unit. It was also a common practice for songwriters to compose several single songs to the same tune but with different titles and put them together in a loosely connected sequence. A song suite consisted of the integration under one title of a group of single songs in the same mode and with the same rhyme. The number of songs included in a song suite could be as few as a couple or as many as two to three dozen. Each song suite is usually introduced by a “head” composed of one or two short stanzas and concludes with a coda.

To better understand *sanqu* prosody, let us look at two song poems and examine their metrical patterns and rhyme schemes. The first is “Fat Couple,” by Wang Heqing (fl. 1246):

### **C16.1**

#### **To the Tune “The Unbreakable String” [*shuangdiao* key]: Fat Couple**

- A rather obese Master Shuang  
2 Bore off an overweight Miss Su-niang  
(Each one of that pair  
4 Was the size of a bear!)  
On the wings of romance, off they sped,  
6 But paused a while at Yü-chang to pant—  
These lovebirds the size of an elephant—  
8 And bang their bellyskins in bed!

[QYSQ 1:47]<sup>3</sup>

one	[measure]	fat	Shuang	Master						【雙調】撥不斷 胖夫妻 ([shuāng diào] bō bú duàn pàng fū qī) 一箇胖雙郎 Δ (yí gè pàng shuāng láng) 就了箇胖蘇娘 Δ (jiù liǎo gè pàng sū niáng) 兩口兒便似熊模樣 ▲ (liǎng kǒu-ér biàn sì xióng mó yàng) 成就了風流嘴豫章 Δ (chéng jiù liǎo fēng liú chuǎn yù zhāng) 繡幃中一對兒鴛鴦象 ▲ (xiù wéi zhōng yí duì-ér yuān yāng xiàng) 交肚皮廝撞 ▲ (jiāo dù pí sī zhuàng)
accompany	already	[measure]	fat	Su	Mistress					
two	person	[particle]	then	resemble	bear	mode	kind			
become	complete	already	wind	flow	pant	Yü-	zhang			
embroidered	curtain	inside	one	pair	[measure]	yuan-	yang	elephant		
inter	belly	skin	mutual	bump						

With its lines of irregular length, this song poem looks very much like a stanza taken from a *ci*. Indeed, it “sounds” like a *ci*, too. The novel rhythmic effect resulting from the alternation of the long and short lines we have seen in the *ci* can also be strongly felt in this *sanqu*. If we ignore the italicized syllables in the song, we can extract the skeleton of its tune pattern:

|        —        — ▲  
|        —        — ▲  
(—)    —        (l)    |        —        —    | ▲  
(l)    |        —        —    |        |        — ▲  
(—)    —        (l)    |        —        —    | ▲  
|        —        —        | (fourth tone) ▲<sup>4</sup>

The tonal patterns of the three-, four-, and seven-character lines are no different from those found in commonly used *ci* lines. Indeed, the types of seven-character lines in this poem are exactly the same as typical seven-character *ci* lines, which were actually “inherited” by the *ci* from the *lǚshi* (regulated verse).<sup>5</sup>

This similarity, however, is not always the case. The second example, a poem by Ma Zhiyuan (1250?–1323?), clearly illustrates this:

### To the Tune “The Song of Shouyang” [*shuangdiao* key]

2 To him I did impart.

4 How can such cruel words be “just a joke,” as you said.

[QYSQ 1:247]

(wǒ xīn lǐ pà na bú pà)

The tonal patterns of lines 3 and 5, | – (–), | – – | (fourth tone) ▲, and of line 4, (–) – | – (–) | | (third tone) ▲, are common in seven-syllable lines of the song poem, but are not found in those of the *ci* and the *lǔshi*. One

cannot but wonder if it was not the different characteristics of the musicality of the song poem that brought about these new types of seven-syllable lines, whose tonal patterns deviate so much from the norms of the *ci* and the *lǔshi*.

The rhyme scheme of the song poem also claims our attention. As can be seen from the two preceding examples, only one rhyme is allowed in a song poem. Since the Yuan *sanqu* writers used the northern vernacular, they did not follow the archaic rhyme categories used in the *lǔshi* and the *ci* but adopted a new system that reflected more accurately the realities (not the least of which was the disappearance of the entering tone) of the living language. Unlike in the *lǔshi* and the *ci*, level tones and oblique tones can be rhymed in song poems. This did not mean, however, that a *sanqu* composer could disregard the difference between the level and the oblique tones. On the contrary, some tune patterns strictly stipulated that certain rhymed words could be in only certain tones. For instance, in “The Unbreakable String,” the rhymed word in the last line had to be in the fourth tone; in “The Song of Shouyang,” the rhymed words in lines 3 and 5 had to be in the fourth tone, and the rhymed word in line 4 could be in only the third tone. A possible reason for this is that rhymed words with carefully chosen tones better matched the music underlying the tune patterns.

The italicized syllables in the two preceding poems, which we ignored in order to see the basic tune patterns, should not be overlooked. They are the “padding words,” or extrametrical syllables (*chenzi*). It is in them that we see the most important difference between the meters of *ci* lines and *sanqu* lines. A *sanqu* composer could add to any verse line—almost at will, although not at the end of the line—extrametrical syllables and thus further vary the shape of the verse. There was no limit to the number of syllables that could be added. For example, there is the following line from “Not Giving In to Old Age” (Bufu lao), by Guan Hanqing (ca. 1220–ca. 1307):

I am a *jingling tingling* bronze bean *that remains hard after being  
steamed, raw after being stewed, that bounces under a big hammer  
and will not pop when being baked.*

我是個蒸不爛煮不熟錘不匾炒不爆響璫璫一粒銅豌豆

*wǒ shì gè zhēng bú làn zhǔ bù shóu chuī bù biǎn chǎo bú bào xiǎng  
dāng dāng yí lì tóng wǎn dòu*

[QYSQ 1:173]

Only the first two and the last five syllables—“I am a bronze bean”—are required by the tune pattern; the other sixteen are all padding syllables! With the help of the extrametrical syllables, composers of song poems could alter the pace and rhythm of the verses in imitation of the natural flow of everyday speech. This may partly explain why, compared with *ci* verses, song poem verses are more complete in their syntactic structure and read more like sentences from spoken language. Where one finds poetic ellipsis in a *shi* or a *ci* poem, one often finds padding words in a song poem.

Besides the colloquial nature of the language of song poems, the musical origin of the genre can also shed some light on its abundant use of the extrametrical syllables. Inasmuch as the tune patterns are the vestiges of the original music, it is only natural that, even after the tunes themselves were lost, the intrinsic musical quality of the tune patterns would prompt the later song poem composers to fill in the gaps left by the silence of the lost melodies.

## POEMS ON NATURAL SCENERY AND HUMAN SENTIMENT

A favorite theme of song poems is natural scenery and the poet's reflection on it. The following example happens to be the single best-known *sanqu* work by arguably its best writer, Ma Zhiyuan. Ma Zhiyuan is one of the four great Yuan dramatists, but he is better known for his *sanqu* works. His mastery of the art is exemplified by “Autumn Thoughts,” in which a series of carefully chosen images establish the mood. His meditative song poems on the quiet life of seclusion reveal the influence of Daoism, and they are considered by many to be too pessimistic. His works in this genre generally are representative of the more refined literati style, and yet there is no lack of the freshness and verve seen in works of the popular style.

### C16.3

To the Tune “Sky-Clear Sand” [*yuediao* key]: Autumn Thoughts

- Withered vines, old trees, crows at dusk,  
 2 A small bridge, flowing water, people's homes,  
 An ancient road, the west wind, a lean horse.  
 4 The evening sun goes down in the west.  
 One heartbroken man at the end of the earth.

[QYSQ 1:242]

【越調】天淨沙 秋思 ([yuè diào] tiānjìng shā qiū sī)

withered	vine	old	tree	dusk	crow	枯藤老樹昏鴉 Δ	(kū téng lǎo shù hūn yā)
small	bridge	flowing	water	people	home	小橋流水人家 Δ	(xiǎo qiáo liú shuǐ rén jiā)
ancient	road	west	wind	lean	horse	古道西風瘦馬 ▲	(gǔ dào xī fēng shòu mǎ)
evening	sun	west	down			夕陽西下	(xī yáng xī xià)
broken	intestines	man	at	heaven	end	斷腸人在天涯 Δ	(duàn cháng rén zài tiān yá)

The imagistic nature of this song is obvious. Except for the word *xia* (goes down) at the end of line 4 in the original, the whole song contains no active verb but only descriptive noun phrases. To compare it to a picture and say that “the poet unfolds a scene like a scroll of Chinese painting”<sup>6</sup> might, however, oversimplify the poetic experience and miss the real spell of the piece. Indeed, the poet does not encourage readers to view as onlookers the picture of a traveler on an autumn evening; rather, he invites them to identify with the traveler. Thus by the end of the song, the traveler's homesickness comes to readers not as a trite sentiment but as a personal experience with a heartrending freshness.

The identical verse structure of the first three lines often leads the unwatchful eye to read them together as a parallel triplet. A close examination of the values carried by the three clusters of images embedded in these lines, however, reveals that, as far as the poetic narrative is concerned, lines 1 and 2 form a thematic unit, while line 3 functions on a different level. The “withered vines, old trees,” and flocks of black crows present a wild and repellent—if not threatening—nature, whereas the “people's homes” and “small bridge” (which, as a man-made object, evokes everyday human activity), with the gurgling water under it, create a congenial ambience. The implication of the contrast between these two sets of images, however, renders itself fully only when readers come to line 3.

Compared with the concrete images (although not without their symbolic connotations) in the two foregoing lines, the images in line 3 are

less specific and appear more like symbols. The ancientness of the road, something not actually discernible, leads readers beyond the scope of the scene at hand and lets them see in their mind's eye the endless road extending into other spaces and other times. The “west wind” not only indicates the time of year but also implies the sadness felt during the season of decay—that is, all the burden carried by the image of autumn in the Chinese literary tradition. Most significantly, the synecdochical use of the “lean horse,” in turn, puts readers in the place of a weary traveler in order to feel the hardship he endures. Line 3 thus allows readers—from a traveler's point of view—to interpret and comment on the situation presented in the couplet preceding it:<sup>7</sup> the homey scene in line 2 appears so inviting simply because it is a familiar scene that the weary traveler sees, however, in an unfamiliar and forbidding setting (represented by the images in line 1) in his journey. It touches off his memory of home; yet, paradoxically, it also reminds him that his own home and its comforts are in another place far beyond reach.

The sight of the crows at dusk at the end of line 1 makes clear the time of day. As if this were not enough, however, the time is pronounced again in line 4: “The evening sun goes down in the west.” This line is the shortest in the song, and it contains the only action verb, whose function is to convey with a sense of urgency and inevitability the message: the day is running out, just as the year is approaching its end. It is at such times that the traveler most keenly feels he should be home. But, alas, everything he sees tells him that home is at the other “end of the earth.”

The following song poem is by Zhang Yanghao (1269–1329), whose reputation as an upright high-ranking official perhaps threatens to eclipse his literary achievements. His rich personal experience, on the one hand, empowers his *sanqu* works with an insight into history and human suffering and, on the other, makes his song poems on withdrawal and retirement seem more genuine and sincere.

#### **C16.4**

#### **To the Tune “Sheep on Mountain Slope” [*zhonglü* key]: Meditation on the Past at Tong Pass**

- Peaks and ridges press together,  
2 Waves and torrents rage,  
Zigzagging between the mountains and the river runs the road

through Tong Pass.

- 4 I look to the Western Capital,  
My thoughts linger.
- 6 It breaks my heart to come to the old place of the Qin and the Han.  
Now palaces and terraces have all turned to dust.
- 8 Dynasties rise,  
The common folk suffer;
- 10 Dynasties fall,  
The common folk suffer.

[QYSQ 1:437]

							【中呂】山坡羊 潼關懷古 ([zhōng lǚ] shān pō yáng tóng guān huái gǔ)	
peak	mountain	like	congest				峰巒如聚 ▲ (fēng luán rú jù)	
wave	billow	like	angry				波濤如怒 ▲ (bō tāo rú nù)	
mountain	river	outside	inside	Tong	Pass	Road	山河表裡潼關路 ▲ (shān hé biǎo lǐ tóng guān lù)	
gaze	West	Capital					望西都 △ (wàng xī dū)	
mind	hesitate	—					意躊躇 △ (yì chóu-chú)	
hurt	heart	Qin	Han	pass	walk	place	傷心秦漢經行處 ▲ (shāng xīn qín hàn jīng xíng chù)	
palace	terrace	ten thousand	room	all	become	already	dirt	宮闕萬間都做了土 ▲ (gōng què wàn jiān dōu zuò le tǔ)
rise							興 (xīng)	
hundred	clan	suffer					百姓苦 ▲ (bǎi xìng kǔ)	
fall							亡 (wáng)	
hundred	clan	suffer					百姓苦 ▲ (bǎi xìng kǔ)	

The poet begins the song by directing the reader's eye to the road that runs through Tong Pass, which guards the passage to the ancient Western Capital and has witnessed numerous bloody battles. Two verbs—"press" and "rage"—are used in lines 1 and 2 to personify the ruggedness of the geography. The static mountains are thus set in



motion, and the irresistible force of the running river is vividly brought forth, suggesting the fierceness of the military conflicts staged in this locale in ancient times. The personification also lends feelings to the mountain ridges and the river waves, so much so that it seems as though they are responding to the poet's thoughtful gaze. The phrase "between the mountains and the river" in line 3 is a quote from the classic **Zuo zhuan** (*Zuo Commentary on the "Spring and Autumn Annals"*), in which a military strategist uses the phrase to illustrate the impregnability of his country's natural defense. The allusion gives the images the weight of its 2,000-year-old history. It is they, "the mountains and the river," that bear witness to the rise and fall of dynasties.

Meditation on the past (*huaigu*) is an old poetic tradition. Numerous poems on the subject were written before—and after—Zhang Yanghao, yet this modest piece stands out as one of the most frequently anthologized *huaigu* poems. A possible explanation can be found in the poet's skill in turning the formal restrictions of the poetic form of the song poem to advantage. The eight short lines—two of them have only one syllable each—are combined with the three long lines to form a rhythmic and easy-to-memorize sound flow. The most forceful and unforgettable are the four concluding lines. Each of the two monosyllabic lines —"[Dynasties] rise" and "[Dynasties] fall"—is followed by the same refrain: "The common folk suffer." The idea that, whatever the case, the people suffer could never have been expressed with such clarity and emphasis had the poet not had this terse contrastive formal structure at his disposal.

The fact that the thematic content of "Meditation on the Past at Tong Pass" is necessarily sustained by its formal properties can be seen even more clearly if we examine the eight other songs by Zhang Yanghao written to the same tune on the same subject. Each of the eight songs uses a historical site as the vantage point from which the poet contemplates the past, and each exploits the tight antithetic structure at the end required by the metrical pattern to drive home its message. The following examples show how some of these *huaigu* songs end the same way as "Meditation on the Past." The tone of sententious certainty, tinged with resignation, is hard to miss:

[Kingdoms] win, / They turn to dust; / [Kingdoms] lose, / They turn to dust.

贏 都變做了土 輸 都變做了土

*yíng / dōu biàn zuò liǎo tǔ / shū / dōu biàn zuò liǎo tǔ*

[QYSQ 1:436]

[Dynasties fall] sooner, / Heaven makes it so; / [Dynasties fall] later, /  
Heaven makes it so.

疾 也是天氣差 遲 也是天氣差

*jí / yě shì tiān qì chāi / chí / yě shì tiān qì chāi*

[QYSQ 1:438]

The King? / Sacrificed in vain; / The subjects? / Sacrificed in vain.

君 乾送了 民 乾送了

*jūn / gān sòng liǎo / mín / gān sòng liǎo*

[QYSQ 1:436]

Glory, / It does not last; / Fame, / It does not last.

功 也是不長久 名 也是不長久

*gōng / yě shì bù cháng jiǔ / míng / yě shì bù cháng jiǔ*

[QYSQ 1:437]

Zhang Yanghao's creative use of the tune pattern of "Sheep on Mountain Slope" is but one example of how a song poem master can turn the restrictive formal requirements of a *sanqu* matrix into powerful devices for thematic expression. I return to this issue later in the chapter.

## POEMS ON THE LIFE OF A RECLUSE

Let us look at two song poems by **Qiao Ji** (1280–1345), a master songwriter who was very conscious of the technique of *sanqu* composition. Qiao Ji's best song poems are fresh, with sharp images and novel expressions, and the aesthetic finish of his works is not achieved at the expense of natural simplicity and ease.

## C16.5

### To the Tune “Drunk in a Peaceful Time” [*zhenggong* key]: Idle Chats of the Woodcutter and the Fisherman

- The fish, skewered on a willow twig, is cooked without delay.
- 2 The wine was newly obtained by bartering the firewood away.  
Now the old woodcutter and the old fisherman have the leisure to  
watch fighting bulls,
- 4 And exchange gossip and idle hearsay.  
The hardship of going through rain and snow troubles their heads,
- 6 Yet they make the best of their meager living by chanting of the  
moon and discussing the wind on a straw mat,  
And with blurry eyes, they talk about heaven and earth over a wine  
gourd.
- 8 What a painting of mountains and rivers!

[QYSQ 1:574]

						【正宮】醉太平漁樵閑話 ([zhèng gōng] zuì tài píng yú qiáo xián huà)			
willow	pierce	fish	instantly	boil	柳穿魚旋煮 ▲ (liǔ chuān yú xuán zhǔ)				
firewood	barter	wine	newly	buy	柴換酒新沽 △ (chái huàn jiǔ xīn gū)				
fight	bull	[particle]	ride	excitement	old	woodcutter	fisherman	鬥牛兒乘興老樵漁 (dòu niú-ér chéng xìng lǎo qiáo yú)	
discuss	leisurely	word	wild	language	論閑言俚語 ▲ (lùn xián yán chāng yǔ)				
agitate	head	skull	wear	cloud	shoulder	snow	bear	bitter	hardship
						燥頭顱東雲擔雪耽辛苦 ▲ (zào tóu lú shù yún dān xuě dān xīn kǔ)			
sit	cattail	cushion	chat	wind	chant	moon	exhaust	live	road
						坐蒲團攀風詠月窮活路 ▲ (zuò pú tuán pān fēng yǒng yuè qióng huó lù)			
press	gourd	—	talk	heaven	say	earth	drunk	dim	blurred
						按葫蘆談天說地醉模糊 △ (àn hú lú tán tiān shuō dì zuì mó hú)			
enter	river	mountain	painting	picture	入江山畫圖 △ (rù jiāng shān huà tú)				

The two images at the beginning of the song, the fisherman's fresh

catch from the river and the wine that the woodcutter purchased with the worth of a day's labor, conjure up a bright picture of the callings of the two men. Their lives are spontaneous, free, and self-sufficient. However, had the poet not skillfully suggested the pleasant freshness of the fish and the "newness" of the wine, which appeal to both the reader's palate and mind, the images could well have projected a very different view: of two poor fellows barely able to eke out their existence by living from hand to mouth. Throughout the song, in fact, it is the poet's selective candidness and light tone that make readers see the ease and satisfaction in an otherwise hard and scanty life. So even when the hardship that the two men have to endure is presented (line 5) side by side with the leisure they enjoy (lines 6–7), readers nonetheless feel that the physical hardship is more than compensated for by the richness of their spiritual enjoyment.

As mentioned, Qiao Ji was a conscious stylist who concerned himself with the art of writing. He is said to have set certain rules for the composition of song poems. A good song, according to him, should have "the head of a phoenix, the belly of a pig, and the tail of a leopard"<sup>8</sup>—that is, a beautiful beginning, a substantive middle section, and a powerful ending. Judging from what we have seen so far, "Idle Chats of the Woodcutter and the Fisherman" seems to have an eye-catching beginning and a healthy body. How about its ending?

The poet brings his description to a sudden stop with the authorial comment that the idyllic life he has presented would fit perfectly in a landscape painting. The scene he has depicted instantly becomes an object within a frame to be admired. This unexpected move concluding the song is, indeed, as powerful as a leopard. It forces readers—now the viewers of a painting—to step back and look at the woodcutter and the fisherman in perspective and to realize that they are no ordinary woodcutter and fisherman, but symbols of certain values that deserve to be treasured dearly.

The woodcutter and the fisherman had long been used as stock images of the recluse and were a favorite topic of Yuan *sanqu* writers.<sup>9</sup> It is interesting to note that actual woodcutters and fishermen could not read and write and did not know the beauty of being in a "painting of mountains and rivers." It was the educated elite who narcissistically saw themselves in the idealized recluse images they created.

Hu Zhiyu (1227–1293) must have had this in mind when he wrote two songs on the subject. The first is about an educated fisherman; the

second, a pair of illiterate woodcutter-fishermen recluses.<sup>10</sup> Hu Zhiyu took pains to show the differences between the two types of recluse. The first piece uses elegant language and is replete with allusions to literary and classical texts, giving a learned appearance; the second is colloquial in tone and, in syntactic structure, imitates the easy flow of everyday speech through its lavish use of extrametrical syllables. But language aside, there is no other clue to any major differences between the literate recluse and his illiterate counterparts in these two songs. For instance, what the literate fisherman does all day in the first song is exactly the same as what the unlettered woodcutter and fisherman do in the second, which is to engage in high-minded talk about the vicissitudes of life. The poet creates two kinds of recluse in the two songs in an attempt to give some legitimacy to the scholar-official recluse under the guise of the woodcutter-fisherman. But one can see that, educated or not, the personae in the two songs are not those who really cut wood and catch fish; rather, they are transfigured images of what the poet imagines he himself could be.<sup>11</sup>

In another song eulogizing the life of a recluse, Qiao Ji speaks in the voice of an “I”:

### **C16.6**

#### **To the Tune “Lüyaobian” [*zhenggong* key]: Of Myself**

- I was not chosen to head the dragon list,  
2 Nor was my name entered into the biography of worthies  
From time to time I’m a sage of wine,  
4 Finding everywhere the Zen of poetry—  
Highest graduate of the college of clouds and mists,  
6 Drunken angel of rivers and lakes,  
My talks and jokes are fit for the Imperial Academy of Compilation.  
8 Loitering,  
I’ve been writing commentaries on the wind and the moon for forty  
years.

[QYSQ 1:574–575]<sup>12</sup>

【正宮】綠么遍 自述 ([zhèng gōng] lǜ yāo mè biàn zì shù)

not	occupy	dragon	head	roster	不占龍頭選	(bú zhàn lóng tóu xuǎn)
not	enter	famous	worthy	biography	不入名賢傳 ▲	(bú rù míng xián zhuàn)
time	time	wine	sage		時時酒聖	(shí shí jiǔ shèng)
place	place	poetry	Zen		處處詩禪 Δ	(chù chù shī chán)
foggy	rosy cloud	poster	first		煙霞狀元	(yān xiá zhuàng yuán)
river	lake	drunken	immortal		江湖醉仙 Δ	(jiāng hú zuì xiān)
laugh	chat	just	be	edit	笑談便是編修院 ▲	(xiào tán biàn shì biān xiū yuàn)
remain	linger			compile academy	留連 Δ	(liú lián)
critique	wind	write	moon	four	批風抹月四十年 Δ	(pī fēng mǒ yuè sì shí nián)

With its ostentatious celebration of the freedom from the burdens of officialdom, this song also belongs to the tradition of recluse literature. Seldom do we see in similar works written before it the carefree playfulness it demonstrates.<sup>13</sup> The persona in this song does not disguise himself as a woodcutter or a fisherman. On the contrary, he makes no secret of his impressive educational background in this humorous poetic version of his curriculum vitae. Of most interest about this retired scholar is that, in order to articulate his rejection of the civil service examination system, he has to borrow a whole set of vocabulary from that system. For instance, to thumb his nose at the academic honor, he boasts of the honor of not being honored for academic success. He titles himself the “highest graduate of the college of clouds and mists,” only to show how little he cares about the same title in the mundane world. Even when he is drunk, he remains sober enough to claim himself the “sage of wine,” trusting that his readers will see the new meaning of “sage,” a loaded term in the Confucian tradition.

The poet’s tongue-in-cheek tactic is quite effective. By using the discourse of the established value system to attack the system itself, he makes his stance very clear that success in a public career means nothing to him and all he wants is the simple life of a recluse. It is hard to doubt his sincerity when he talks about the joy of “finding everywhere the Zen of poetry,” which could not be found in the busy world of officialdom. However, when he compares, in line 7, the talking and joking in his leisurely life with the official duties in the Imperial Academy of Compilation (a more literal translation of the line reads, “Talks and jokes are my Imperial Academy of Compilation”), a problem arises: the poet cannot simply relish the joy of his life without comparing his leisure with the burdens of official duties. The last line brings this out more sharply. Granted that the expression “writing commentaries on the wind and the

moon” is a cliché connoting the literary elite’s elegant enjoyment of nature, the kinetic details suggested by the two verbs—*pi* (to correct with a writing brush) and *mo* (to write or to cross out), meaning “to comment”—are reactivated by their contextual association with the daily routine in the Imperial Academy (line 7). It is amazing that the poet, not a bureaucrat himself in real life, would know so well the thrill of wielding an editorial brush. The wit of the metaphor drives his point home, yet one cannot but wonder why, to illustrate the pleasure of a recluse, the natural beauty of the wind and the moon should be turned into lifeless papers and documents. Does the poet know of no other way to define his life besides keeping an anxious eye on what the social climbers—whom he despises so much—are doing and gloating over their misfortune? Shouldn’t a true recluse, who has nothing to do with the world of fame and gain, be more confident in the value of his quiet and plain life and leave alone the world he considers inferior and undesirable? The semantic field that Qiao Ji carefully builds in “Of Myself” betrays some inner conflict: his unconscious obsession with the value he consciously, and vigorously, rejects.

There is a reason for the perhaps overzealous scrutiny of the inner realities of a self-glorifying recluse. Although eremitism has a long tradition in Chinese literature, the disproportionately great number of songs in this category found in the bulk of *sanqu* works reflects the awkward situation in which Yuan intellectuals found themselves. Unlike other non-Han peoples before them, who embraced Chinese culture after taking over the control of the heartland of China, the Mongol rulers never really trusted the Han populace. It was very difficult for Confucian scholars to enter, as their Song predecessors had, the civil service, even after the examination system had been restored after a long hiatus.<sup>14</sup> For many of the scholarly class, therefore, giving up their ambitions for a public career and settling down into a quiet private life was more a necessity than a choice. It should not be surprising, then, to see the lofty ideal of the recluse’s life complicated by the new social and political realities of the time.

## LOVE SONGS

Love songs account for a great portion of the extant *sanqu* works. Except for their greater boldness in depicting the sensual pleasures of love, which has caused some critics to regard this group of songs as erotic,

song poems do not tell us much more about love's ennui and other boudoir sentiments than the song lyrics of the *Huajian* tradition. It is in their freshness of poetic expression, reminiscent of the voice of the folk songs of the period of the Great Division (420–581), that song poems stand alone. The following three love songs all show some influence of this folk tradition.

The author of the first song is Guan Hanqing, generally considered the best and certainly the most productive Yuan dramatist. His skill as a playwright can be seen in many of his *sanqu* works. His description of scenes of parting and longing, when at its best, is often combined with a subtle revelation of the inner lives of the lovers. Guan Hanqing's keen sense of the living language of his day enabled him to employ different voices to suit different poetic situations.

## C16.7

### To the Tune “A Half” [*xianlü* key]: On Love

- All was quiet outside the green-gauze window curtain;  
 2 He knelt down in front of my bed and wanted to get intimate.  
 I just called him an ingrate and turned my back on him.  
 4 Though there was annoyance in what I said,  
 Half of it meant to reject; the other half, consent.

[QYSQ 1:156]

green	gauze	window	outside	quiet	without	person	
kneel	in	bed	front	hurry	want	kiss	
curse	done	one	fail	heart	back	turn	body
though	be	my	word	[particle]	annoyed		
one	half	[particle]	push	decline	one	half	[particle] consent

【仙呂】一半兒 題情  
 ([*xiān lǚ*] yí bàn-r tí qíng)  
 碧紗窗外靜無人 Δ  
 (*bì shā chuāng wài jìng wú rén*)  
 跪在床前忙要親 Δ  
 (*guì zài chuáng qián máng yào qīn*)  
 罵了箇負心回轉身 Δ  
 (*mà liǎo gè fù xīn huí zhuǎn shēn*)  
 雖是我話兒嗔 Δ  
 (*suī shì wǒ huà-r chēn*)  
 一半兒推辭一半兒肯 Δ  
 (*yí bàn-r tuī cí yí bàn-r kěn*)

Using his skills as a playwright, the author is able to create a dramatic scene in this poem with economy. The persona does not explain why her



lover deserves to be called an “ingrate.” It could be that she is just playing a game with him so as to heighten the pleasure of lovemaking. More probably, her lover has a fickle heart, and she decides that his frivolity should not pass unpunished. Still, she finds it hard to reject him.

The bittersweet experience of love is captured in the dialectic structure at the end. It should be noted that the metrical tune title of the song, “A Half,” requires that any piece written to the tune end with “half ...; half ...” In fact, “On Love” is selected from a quadruple song sequence, each poem of which deals with one aspect of a complicated love affair. In the first song, the persona tells that her relationship with her “cute wretch sweetheart” (which is itself an excellent example of the “half ... half” contradiction) has been “half pain and half fun.” In another, she complains that, because of her lover’s absence, her bed is “half-warm and halfcold,” just like their unstable relationship. In the last song of the sequence, she simply admits that there is no way to know his heart, for “half of it is true while the other half is false.”<sup>15</sup>

We thus have another example showing how the formal properties of the tune patterns became an integral part of the poetic expression of *sanqu* works. Statistics support this observation. Of the forty-three extant song poems written by eleven poets to the tune “A Half,” thirty-nine take love and boudoir sentiments as their subjects. Twenty-nine of these bear thematic titles, of which thirteen use the word “love,” seven use “spring” in the amorous sense of the word, and the rest are about the lovelorn sentiments of female personae touched off by fallen flowers or wine, and tears over tokens of love like a kerchief or a letter, and so on. All of them fully exploit the ambivalent “half ... half” in the coda, which is stipulated, or, rather, guaranteed, by the tune pattern. Unique as it might be, the case of songs composed to the tune “A Half” provides a wonderful example of the interaction between the thematic content and the formal pattern in the creation of *sanqu*. On the one hand, the special features of a tune pattern (which originated in music) facilitated and encouraged the use of the pattern for certain topics; on the other, songwriters’ conscious experimentation with the pattern sharpened (or, paradoxically, in less successful cases, stylized or fossilized) the expressive power of such special formal features.

The second love song is by Guan Yunshi (1286–1324), also known by his Uighur name, Sewinch Qaya, the most outstanding of several non-Han *sanqu* poets, whose achievements compare with those of other poets on an absolutely equal footing. His versatile style enabled him to

show distinctive personal traits in his treatment of such conventional subjects as romantic love and the celebration of rustic life. His mastery of language, especially his ability to use individual speeches to enliven dramatic scenes, sets him apart from other *sanqu* writers.

### C16.8

#### To the Tune “Clear River, a Prelude” [*shuangdiao* key]: On Separation, No. 4

- If I meet him again,  
2 This live message I will deliver to him:  
Not that I didn’t want to write,  
4 Nor that I ain’t talented and bright—  
I circled along the Clear River, but could not find a piece of sky-size paper.

[QYSQ 1:370]

									【雙調】清江引 惜別 ([shuāng diào] qīng jiāng yǐn xī bié)	
if	still	with	him	mutual	see	time			若還與他相見時 Δ (rào hái yǔ tā xiāng jiàn shí)	
speak	one	true	transmit	show						道個真傳示 ▲ (dào gè zhēn chuán shì)
not	be	not	write	letter						不是不修書 (bú shì bù xiū shū)
not	be	without	talent	thought						不是無才思 Δ (bú shì wú cái sī)
circle	clear	river	buy	not	obtain	sky	kind	paper	繞清江買不得天樣紙 ▲ (rào qīng jiāng mǎi bù dé tiān yàng zhǐ)	

The persona is rehearsing what she will say when she sees “him” again: she did not write to him precisely because she loves him too much! She could not find a piece of paper large enough to contain all her thoughts and feelings.

Does the girl mean that, had she written to him, her love for him would have been less? The logic behind her explanation seems hard to follow, but it makes perfect sense to those in love. The “live message” in line 2 means a spoken “letter.” In the Chinese, the adjective “true” modifies “message.” Not lifeless ink on paper but the living words from the girl’s

mouth, delivered in person with charm, are what express her true love. Her true and living “letter” will contain so much love that—if her claim of an attempted purchase of paper is to be believed—its contents would fill up the space between heaven and earth. The girl’s forceful argument is itself ample proof that she is not without talent (line 4). No matter how incredulous her lover might be, one can well imagine that his heart will be tender with the joy of love when he hears her witty explanation.

Although short, “On Separation, No. 4,” is greatly expressive. Every word, every image counts. The “if” at its beginning, for example, tells that what it depicts has not yet happened. It sets a vivid scene of the persona engaged in intense mental communication with her lover at the moment when we come upon her. This attests to the truthfulness of the claim she makes, by implication, later: although she did not write to him, she thinks about him all the time. The “Clear River” in the last line cannot, therefore, be taken as simply a proper noun. It does not matter whether it is the name of a town or a river—the crystal clarity of the image, together with the cleanness of the image of the “sky-size paper,” symbolize the purity, hence chastity, of the persona. The transparency of the two images best exemplifies the song’s unornamented, colloquial language and its straightforward tone.

Like Guan Hanqing, Bai Pu (1226–after 1306), the author of the next love song, was one of the great dramatists of the Yuan. His descriptive song poems are full of bright colors and fresh images, while those on romantic love are alive with dramatic scenes depicted in the language of everyday speech and yet free from the bawdiness frequently seen in similar *sanqu*.

### **C16.9**

#### **To the Tune “Spring Song” [*zhonglü* key]: On Love**

- Laughing, I block out the silver candlelight with a red sleeve,  
2 And forbid my erudite dear one to read books.  
Nestling together, we have such fun.  
4 Isn’t that only about exams?  
Who cares even if you pass?

[QYSQ 1:195]

							【中呂】陽春曲 題情 ([zhōng lǚ] yáng chūn qǔ tí qíng)
laugh	take	red	sleeve	cover	silver	candle	笑將紅袖遮銀燭 Δ (xiào jiāng hóng xiù zhē yín zhú)
not	allow	talent	lad	night	read	book	不放才郎夜看書 Δ (bú fàng cái láng yè kàn shū)
mutual	nestle	mutual	embrace	get	happy	enjoyment	相偎相抱取歡娛 Δ (xiāng wēi xiāng bào qǔ huān yú)
only	not	over	repeatedly	respond	recommendation		止不過迭應舉 ▲ (zhǐ bú guò dié yǐng jǔ)
reach	grade	will	how	like			及第待何如 Δ (jí dì dài hé rú)

Although the translation adopts a first-person female voice, there are other ways to read the song, because not a single personal pronoun is used in the original, and it is hard to tell if this is “my” story or “his” or “her” story. Readers can choose to take the first three lines as a third-person narration and the last two lines as a direct quote from the girl, or even to treat the whole piece as a third-person story, with the two concluding lines being the poet’s authorial comment. In any case, no one will miss the message conveyed by this lighthearted love song.

The girl’s “laughing” (depicted by a verb in the original) at the beginning of the song sets the tone for everything that follows. The coquettish laugh makes the girl’s move a loving gesture when she tries to prevent her lover from reading and gives him no excuse to get annoyed. It also brings out the naïveté in her undisguised refutation of his worldly ambitions (lines 4–5) and makes her exhortation sound somewhat pleasing. The charm and sweetness of the female character, which can be palpably felt between the lines, is living proof that the joy of love is far more desirable than success in one’s official career. Judging from the intensity of the love scene in the middle of the song (line 3), the “red sleeve” successfully overcomes the “silver candlelight” (line 1).

The word “silver,” which modifies “candle,” refers either to the color of the candle or of the light it casts or to the material of the candle stand. The only thing that matters is the original meaning of the word: “money.” The blocking out of the silver candle by the red sleeve—whose symbolic meaning is evident—is therefore a metonymy standing for the conflict between two values. The conflict is further complicated by the “books” (line 2) the girl’s lover reads, since it is with them that she must compete for his attention.

The entanglement can be explained by a possible subtext in the poem, a popular saying that enjoys the same status as that of the best-known nursery rhymes in the Chinese language. It reads like a lampoon definition of the civil service examination system: “In books there are thousands of bushels of grain; in books there is no lack of golden mansions; in books there are girls as beautiful as jade.” The argument that concludes the poem takes the same utilitarian approach. Isn’t it just about money and women? Whether one can find such things in books is questionable. But just look at the “red sleeve” that is close at hand, the argument urges; the girl “as beautiful as jade” is right in front of you. Therefore, “who cares even if you pass?” (line 5). The rhetorical question forcefully declares that the “red sleeve” should outweigh the “books.” (Had the question been posed as “who cares even if you *fail*?” it would have implied that success is the first choice and the “red sleeve” only the comforting compensation one gets after failing the exam.) Seen in this light, besides the alternatives previously mentioned, perhaps there is yet another way to interpret the point of view of “On Love.” The concluding lines could be the exclamation uttered by the male character, who has just been enlightened by the education of love and wants to throw away his books for good.

## POEMS OF RAMBUNCTIOUS WIT AND IMPUDENT HUMOR

Any survey of representative *sanqu* works, no matter how brief, cannot leave out song poems of witticisms and humor. The following poem is by a poet whose hallmark can be easily seen from even a casual glance at the list of his songs: “On Baldness,” “Big Fish,” “Turtle with Green Hair,” “Long-Haired Little Dog,” “Sister Wang Got Beaten in the Bathroom,” and “Fat Couple,” presented in the introductory section as an example of *sanqu* prosody.

The poet Wang Heqing is known almost exclusively for his raw and exuberant humor. His works on trivial, “vulgar,” and erotic subjects are worthy of inclusion in any survey of *sanqu* works because they tell about the cultural milieu of their time and are among the best reminders of the genre’s origins in the streets, marketplaces, and entertainment quarters. The following song poem is about a big butterfly.

### C16.10

To the Tune “Heaven in a Drunkard’s Eye” [*xianlü* key]:

## On the Big Butterfly

- Having emerged from Zhuangzi's dream,  
 2 With its two wings mounting on the spring wind,  
 It empties three hundred gardens in one gulp.  
 4 Can this be the gallant breed?  
 How it scares away the flower-chaser bees!  
 6 With a gentle flap of its wings  
 It blows the flower vendors to the east side of the bridge.

[QYSQ 1:41]

							【仙呂】醉中天 詠大蝴蝶	
							([xiān lǚ] zuì zhōng tiān yǒng dà hú dié)	
cicada	break	Zhuang	Zhou	dream				蟬破莊周夢
							(chán pò zhuāng zhōu mèng)	
two	wing	ride	east	wind				兩翅架東風 Δ
							(liǎng chì jià dōng fēng)	
three	hundred	[measure]	famous	garden				三百座名園 Δ
							(sān bǎi zuò míng yuán)	
one	pluck	one	[measure]	empty				一揀一箇空 Δ
							(yī cǎi yí gè kōng)	
hard	speak	wind	flow	breed				難道風流種 Δ
							(nán dào fēng liú zhǒng)	
scare	death	search	flower	's	honey	bee	嚇殺尋芳的蜜蜂 Δ	
							(xià shā xún fāng de mì fēng)	
light	light	-ly	fly	move				輕輕的飛動 Δ
							(qīng qīng de fēi dòng)	
have	sell	flower	person	fan	across	bridge	east	把賣花人搨過橋東 Δ
							(bǎ mài huā rén shān guò qiáo dōng)	

The song is a parody of the **yongwu** (poetry on things). Anecdote has it that in the early 1260s there appeared in the grand capital Dadu (present-day Beijing) a gigantic butterfly, and it is believed that the insect gave the poet an excuse to write this song.

Since the poet tells us unmistakably that his butterfly flies directly from **Zhuangzi's** famous dream, this is a good place to examine how a seemingly simple *sanqu* ditty, in the plain language of everyday speech and on a flippant subject that appeals more to the unlettered, can also be charged, or riddled, with allusions, a game any lettered practitioner of traditional classical poetry was good at.

According to Zhuangzi's famous dream, the philosopher does not know whether he is his own self taking the form of a butterfly in a dream, or a butterfly dreaming that it is Zhuangzi. The original message is that there is no hard-and-fast demarcation between reality and illusion. But, with the passage of time, the butterfly dream has become a fable reminding people of the illusory and ephemeral nature of human life: it is but a dream. The poet borrows the powerful image from Zhuangzi and then remolds it into a clichéd metaphor of a two-winged pleasureseeker (lines 2–3), which itself alludes to numerous “flower-picking” verses exemplifying the Chinese version of *carpe diem*.<sup>16</sup> In this way, Wang Heqing defends with disarming wit the dissolute lifestyle of a womanizer; using the simplistic, yet popular, interpretation of Zhuangzi's philosophical butterfly, he repeats the adage that life is short and one should pick the flower while it is in blossom.

The image of the butterfly's “two wings mounting on the spring wind” (line 2)—with the literal “east wind” standing for springtime—does not merely imply the high time for flower picking and emphasize the sense of urgency in the *carpe diem* motif. The image is also meant to convey the sensual pleasure that the butterfly experiences in its carefree “sweeping” of the flowers. The thrill and sense of freedom in the airborne pose is reminiscent of the well-known image of the Big Roc (*Peng* bird) in the *Zhuangzi*, whose two wings are as big as clouds and “mount on the back of the wind” in its “ninety-thousand-mile journey.” The title of the chapter from which this image comes is, as it happens, “Free and Easy Wandering,” and it has become a set phrase used to describe total, unlicensed freedom. The reading of this hidden allusion into the image can be justified with further internal evidence in the song. The big butterfly “shames to death”<sup>17</sup> small-time flower chasers, like the honeybees (line 5), with his enviable virile feats (line 3), in exactly the same manner in which Zhuangzi's Big Roc thwarts the small creatures, like the little doves and quails with his size and movement of heavenly proportions.

Wang Heqing ends the song by making, as if effortlessly and in passing, yet one more allusion to old texts. The “flower vendors” (line 7) allude to a Song dynasty poem, “On Butterfly,” in which flower sellers, urged on by the excitement of the beautiful spring scene, “one after another, rush to the other side of the bridge.”<sup>18</sup> In this new context, the role played by the “flower vendors” changes. Can they be those who sell the flower—that is, pimps? By having them fanned across the bridge, the

poet seems to allow the big butterfly one more chance to demonstrate his capability “with a gentle flap of its wings” (line 6)—the butterfly requires no help from matchmakers of any kind.

The travesty of the Zhuangzi images carries, in this song, only the positive note. The poem totally transfigures the otherwise disdainful and distasteful playboy image of the butterfly and makes it glow with the luster of the carefree spirit of the original butterfly of the *Zhuangzi* and the ease and the elegant, condescending air of the Big Roc from the same text. One can label the butterfly “gallant” (*fengliu*) (line 4), but just as the term *fengliu* can mean anything from “debauched” and “dissolute” to “talented” and “elegant,” even “heroic,” the butterfly’s true color is open to anybody’s interpretation. Judging from the way the poet presents the butterfly, the apparent uncertainty and puzzlement expressed by the inquisitive phrase *nandao* (couldn’t we say ...? isn’t it ...?) at the beginning of line 4 actually betrays his admiration for and wonder at the amazing creature he has created.

The carefree playfulness of the butterfly and the poet’s appreciative attitude toward it thus tell us much about the cultural milieu of the time when the *sanqu* and its sister genre, the *zaju* (variety play), flourished. Those who might be surprised by the bold message of this song need only read the following selections from the song suite “Not Giving In to Old Age” to see that the impudence of “On the Big Butterfly” was by no means abnormal in its time. The author of this song suite is none other than Guan Hanqing (whose work is discussed earlier in this chapter), the greatest playwright of the time and a close friend of Wang Heqing:

I’ve plucked every bud hanging over the wall,  
and picked every roadside branch of the willow.  
The flower I plucked had the softest red petals,  
the willows I picked were the tenderest green.  
A rogue and a lover, I’ll rely  
on my picking and plucking dexterity  
’til flowers are ruined and willows wrecked.  
I’ve picked and plucked half the years of my life,  
a generation entirely spent  
lying with willows, sleeping with flowers.



I'm champion rake of all the world,  
The cosmic chieftain of rogues.

.....

You think I'm too old!

Forget it!

I'm the best known lover anywhere....

[QYSQ 1:172]<sup>19</sup>

pull	out	wall	[measure]	[measure]	flower
snap	facing	road	twig	twig	willow
flower	pull	red	pistil	tender	
willow	snap	green	twig	supple	
prodigal	son	wind	flow		

【南吕宫】一枝花 不服老  
 ([nán lǚ gōng] yì zhī huā bù fú lǎo)  
 攀出牆朵朵花  
 (pān chū qiáng duǒ duǒ huā)  
 折臨路枝枝柳 ▲  
 (zhé lín lù zhī zhī liǔ)  
 花攀紅蕊嫩  
 (huā pān hóng ruǐ nèn)  
 柳折翠條柔 Δ  
 (liǔ zhé cuì tiáo róu)  
 浪子風流 Δ  
 (làng zǐ fēng liú)

rely	[particle]	my	snap	willow	pull	flower	hand	憑著我折柳攀花手 ▲ ( <i>píng zhe wǒ zhé liǔ pān huā shǒu</i> )
till	wreck	[particle]	flower	damaged	willow	with	rest	直煞得花殘柳敗休 Δ ( <i>zhí shà dé huā cán liǔ bài xiū</i> )
half	life	over	snap	willow	pull	flower		半生來折柳攀花 ( <i>bàn shēng lái zhé liǔ pān huā</i> )
one	life	in	sleep	flower	lie	willow		一世裡眠花臥柳 ▲ ( <i>yí shì lǐ mián huā wò liǔ</i> )
								梁州 ( <i>liáng zhōu</i> [tune title])
I	be	one	universal	heaven	below	brat	gentleman	collar sleeve 我是箇普天下郎君領袖 ( <i>wǒ shì gè pǔ tiān xià láng jūn lǐng xiù</i> )
top	lifetime	region	prodigal	son	class	head		蓋世界浪子班頭 Δ ( <i>gài shì jiè làng zǐ bān tóu</i> )
...								
you	say	I	old	[particle]				你道我老也 ( <i>nǐ dào wǒ lǎo yě</i> )
temporarily	stop							暫休 Δ ( <i>zǎn xiū</i> )
occupy	range	ground	wind	moon	exploit	fame	head	占排場風月功名首 ▲ ( <i>zhàn pái chǎng fēng yuè gōng míng shǒu</i> )

The persona is thus an even bigger, and much more brazen, butterfly. He certainly will “shame to death” the small crooks:

You boys are baby bunnies  
from sandy little rabbit holes  
on grassy hills,  
caught in the hunt  
for the very first time;  
I’m an ol’ pheasant cock plumed with gray;  
I’ve been caged,  
I’ve been snared,  
a tried and true stud  
who’s run the course.

[QYSQ 1:172–173]<sup>20</sup>

[illegible]

The whole song suite, from which the preceding quotes are taken, consists of the libertine's monologue only, modified by no editorial frame or authorial intrusion. There is no sign in it suggesting that the persona is cast in the light of a villain. On the contrary, from the confidence expressed in his shameless flaunting, one can see that he expects himself to be the object of everybody's envy and admiration. The image of such an antihero had never been seen in Chinese literature.<sup>21</sup>

Guan Hanqing's experience with the *zaju* partly explains his success in his characterization of the colorful and rambunctious rogue. The format of the *sanqu* song suite, which is similar to the *zaju* song suite used as the basic structural unit in the variety plays, also helped by providing him with ample space to elaborate on the topic. Due to the limits of space, only a small portion of the suite has been quoted. So just imagine that the same voice brags and babbles on for five times as long, telling you that the speaker is a "tough old bronze bean" that will not be softened by cooking, or smashed, and that he will not cease his flower picking until he is summoned by the King of Hell.

## NOTES

3. Crump, *Song-Poems from Xanadu*, 44. This song is a parody of a well-known love story, said to have taken place in the city of Yuzhang. The poet borrows the names of the two lovers in the story, Mr. Shuang and Miss Su, and reassigns them to the fat couple in the poem.

4. For an explanation of the symbols used here, see p. xxv.

5. For discussions of the prosodies of regulated verse and song lyrics, see chapters 8 and 12.

6. James J. Y. Liu, *The Art of Chinese Poetry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 42.

7. Regarding this song, Wayne Schlepp observes that “without verbs there is no question of the poet’s interpreting the scene,” and “the reader feels he can experience [the scene] directly” (*San-ch’ü: Its Technique and Imagery* [Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970], 125).

8. For a biographical note on Qiao Ji, see Sui Shusen, *Quan Yuan sanqu* (*Complete Song Poems of the Yuan*) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1964), 1:573.

9. A well-informed and comprehensive discussion of the topic is in James I. Crump, “Tales by Woodsman for the Fisher’s Ear,” in *Songs from Xanadu: Studies in Mongol-Dynasty Song-Poetry* (*San-ch’ü*) (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1983), 81–105.

10. Sui, *Quan Yuan sanqu*, 1:69.

11. It might not be irrelevant to note here that Hu Zhiyu was one of only a few of those Han Chinese who was able to serve in an office of the Yuan government and rose to a high position.

12. Qiao Ji, “Of Myself,” trans. Sherwin S. S. Fu, in *Sunflower Splendor: Three Thousand Years of Chinese Poetry*, ed. Wu-chi Liu and Irving Yucheng Lo (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975), 437–438.

13. The following lines by Liu Yong from the Song dynasty, whose works are discussed in chapter 13, might come close:

Since I fail to soar high,  
Why not just indulge in pleasure?  
There’s no need to talk about loss and gain—  
A talented songwriter  
Is no doubt a high minister in plain robe. (QSC 1:57)

14. For a detailed discussion of this issue, see Frederick W. Mote, “China Under Mongol Rule,” in *Imperial China, 900–1800* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 474–513, especially 474–477, 504–507.

15. Sui, *Quan Yuan sanqu*, 1:156.

16. The best example of these verses is in “Jin lü yi” (The Garment Embroidered with Gold Thread), by an anonymous Tang author:

Treasure not the garment embroidered with gold thread,  
But seize the young spring day.  
Just pick the flower when you see one—  
You’ll have no time to regret when there’s none. (QTS 11:8862)

17. There is no translation that can better capture the meaning of the verb at the beginning of line 5 than this rendition by Crump, in *Songs from Xanadu*, 14.

18. Xie Wuyi (1068–1112), “On Butterfly,” in *Quan Song shi* (*Complete Shi Poetry of the Song*) (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1991–1998), 22:14858.

19. Guan Hanqing, “Not Giving In to Old Age,” in *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911*, trans. and ed. Stephen Owen (New York: Norton, 1996), 729.

20. Guan Hanqing, “Not Giving In to Old Age,” 730.

21. The term “antihero” is used by Owen in his comment on the song suite in *Anthology of Chinese Literature*, 728.

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## ***Shi* Poetry of the Ming and Qing Dynasties**

Poets in the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1911) dynasties continued to employ the major poetic genres of ***shi***, ***ci***, and ***qu***. These two dynasties, commonly referred to as the late imperial period, witnessed the unprecedented spread of poetry writing among men and, for the first time in Chinese history, women. Numerous volumes of poetry were published, and many of them are extant. Poetry collections by women alone are recorded to be more than 3,000.<sup>1</sup> The quantity of *shi* poetry that has survived greatly surpasses the some 200,000 poems from the Song ([chap. 15](#)), amounting to more than 1 million poems. No attempt has yet been made at the seemingly impossible task of compiling a complete collection, as has been done for the Tang and Song and earlier dynasties.<sup>2</sup>

The affluent period from the sixteenth century to the fall of the Ming in 1644 saw remarkable developments in commercial print culture and the spread of literacy and education to a wider public that crossed the previously stricter limitations of class and gender.<sup>3</sup> This increase in literacy and the pervasive practice of writing poetry among an expanded community of men and women transformed the craft of poetry into a supple discursive medium for recording an extraordinary range of subjects and articulating autobiographical and everyday dimensions of experience. The continued, even increased vitality of the poetic medium in the Qing was an effect of the fervor with which individual women and men took up poetry as a technology of self-representation and as a tool of communication and social exchange. The majority of these writers necessarily have not been part of the received poetic canon. However, for the first time, the voices of individual women were no longer isolated instances, nor could women be ignored as they wrote themselves into history by means of poetry.<sup>4</sup>

Although no new prosodic forms were created in this period of extensive participation, the Ming and Qing are distinguished by dynamic developments in literary theory and criticism. Poetic theories ranged from those with formalistic concerns advocating Tang or Song poetic models for emulation, to those emphasizing spontaneous, natural expression in style and emotion. The theoretical writings and poetic practice of the most important poet-critics constituted influential literary trends both in their own time and in later periods, and these poets have, in turn, been constructed as canonical figures in literary history.<sup>5</sup> While there may be some consensus regarding outstanding poets of the period, the sheer volume and variety of poetry militate against a common list of “masterpieces.” Difficult as it is to do justice to this relatively unexplored but extremely immense and rich field, this chapter aims to show Ming–Qing poetry as a multifaceted cultural practice by taking a two-part approach. First, I will discuss poems written by leading exponents of particular theories to illustrate schematically some of the major poetic trends in the Ming and Qing. Second, because the diversity and pervasiveness of poetry writing went beyond the elitist theoretical discourse on the art of poetry in this period, I will introduce important contexts for reading poetry as a commonplace, diurnal practice in the lives of men and women. These include the meaningful organization of individual poetic collections and the significance of the material conditions and historical specificities informing poetic production. The selections emphasize the fundamental function of poetry to inscribe life experiences in three categories of poems with contrasting but overlapping personal, social, and political contexts in the late imperial period: poems written during the disorder of the Ming–Qing dynastic transition in the mid-seventeenth century,<sup>6</sup> poems that exemplify the pervasive autobiographical impulse in the poetic act, and poems that demonstrate the interest in recording personal experiences in everyday life. These contexts of poetic production foreground the sense of subjectivity and agency of the writers. We will see how, through poetry, men and women empower themselves with a capacity for action, even if that action may be limited to self-expression and the act of recording.

## **POETIC THEORY AND POETIC PRACTICE**

The first important literary movement to arise in the Ming was the Archaist school represented by the Former Seven and Latter Seven

Masters, many of whom were scholar-officials in government. Its influence dominated the poetic scene in the sixteenth century, particularly in the capital, Beijing. The Archaist poets advocated emulation of poetic models from the past, specifically the Tang. The best-known leader, Li Mengyang (1475–1531), one of the Former Seven Masters stated famously that when it came to ideal models, “prose must be that of the Qin and Han, and poetry must be that of the High Tang.”<sup>7</sup> They rejected Song poetry for its discursiveness and sought to imitate the grand, expansive vision, affective intensity, and perceptual qualities embodied in the allusive diction and powerful imagery of Tang verse, particularly those found in the poetry of **Du Fu** (712–770). The following widely anthologized heptasyllabic regulated poem by Li Mengyang exemplifies these characteristics:

### C17.1 Autumn Gaze

- The Yellow River winds around the Han frontier walls,  
 2 Over the river in the autumn wind, a few lines of wild geese.  
 The attackers crossing trenches pursue on wild horses,  
 4 The general with his bow case and arrow shoots at the Heavenly Wolf.  
 Yellow dust by the ancient ford confuses the swift chariots,  
 6 White moonbeam across the void chills the battleground.  
 Up north in Shuofang there were many bold plans, they say,  
 8 Only nowadays where is there a Guo Fenyang?

[MSBC, 717]

							秋望	(qiū wàng)
Yellow	River	water	wind	Han	border	wall	黃河水繞漢邊牆	(Huáng hé shuǐ rào Hàn biān qiáng)
river	above	autumn	wind	wild goose	several	row	河上秋風雁幾行	(hé shàng qiū fēng yàn jǐ háng)
attacker-	[suffix]	cross	moat	pursue	wild	horse	客子過壕追野馬	(kè zǐ guò háo zhuī yě mǎ)
general	[suffix]	bow case	arrow	shoot	sky	wolf	將軍拔箭射天狼	(jiāng jūn táo jiàn shè tiān láng)
yellow	dust	ancient	ford	confuse	fly	cart	黃塵古渡迷飛輓	(huáng chén gǔ dù mí fēi wǎn)
white	moon	across	empty	cold	battle	field	白月橫空冷戰場	(bái yuè héng kōng lěng zhàn chǎng)
hear	say	Shuo-	fang	many	brave	strategy	聞道朔方多勇略	(wén dào Shuò fāng duō yǒng lüè)
only	now	who	is	Guo	Fen-	yang	只今誰是郭汾陽	(zhǐ jīn shuí shì Guō Fén yáng)

[Tonal pattern 1a, see p. 172]



The northwestern frontier became a popular theme in High Tang poetry, attending the military expansion of the empire.<sup>8</sup> In the Ming Archaist valorization of Tang models, the frontier theme was often taken up by both male and female poets as a literary exercise and, in some cases, as poetic records of actual expeditions. By its very subject matter, the frontier topos lends itself to capturing the strength and vigor of Tang poetry. The title of the poem, “Autumn Gaze,” sets up the anticipation of a seasonal view. Li Mengyang skillfully deploys Tang poetic conventions to re-create the broad expansive prospect of the border region. The opening couplet begins with the scene of a vast horizon suggested by the view of the Yellow River meandering along the Great Wall of the Han dynasty, using the conventional temporal displacement to the past employed in Tang poetry. The visual trajectory is directed upward to the sky by the image of wild geese migrating south, seen as distant lines above the riverscape. The two required parallel couplets in the middle each form perfect syntactic, semantic, and tonal contrasts (lines 3–4 and 5–6). These formal symmetrical structures further elaborate on details of the frontier. In an offensive attack, the non-Chinese nomadic tribes, riding on horses, cross the defensive moats into Chinese territory. Li Mengyang cleverly employs the term “wild horses,” an allusion for rousing energy (*qi*),<sup>9</sup> to create the spectacle of nomadic attackers galloping across the dusty desert. This invasion is countered by the force of the defensive act of the Han general aiming his arrow at the “Heavenly Wolf” (the star Sirius), here standing for the “barbarians.” The scene depicted in this couplet with such vivid imagery, as though witnessed by the poet, is temporally ambiguous, suspended between past and present in the poet’s imagination. It is an imagined battle scene in the past triggered by the poet’s arrival at the frontier. Its pastness is reinforced in the next couplet by the timeless quality of the “ancient ford,” enduring moon, and deserted battleground frozen in history. Only with the rhetorical question in the closing couplet, in which the poet follows the desired move to the affective mode in regulated verse, does he articulate his admiration for the military glory of the Tang and his present doubts by alluding to Guo Ziyi (697–781), the Tang military commissioner of the Shuofang commandery where the poet was at the time of the poem. Guo Ziyi was one of the leading loyalist generals who helped defeat the rebellion started by An Lushan (d. 757) under the Tang emperor Xuanzong (r. 712–756). He was enfeoffed as prince of the Fenyang commandery for his efforts to save the Tang and was referred to as Guo Fenyang in later

periods. This poem is an esteemed emulation of Tang poetics.

In the Archaist desire to emulate Tang diction and imagery, the individual voice of the poet is often suppressed, and the less successful efforts resulted in turgid and uninspired formalistic pieces. Toward the end of the sixteenth century, a strong opposition to Archaist practices arose, spearheaded by Yuan Hongdao (1568–1610) and his two brothers—Yuan Zongdao (1570–1626) and Yuan Zhongdao (1560–1600)—that came to be known as the Gong'an school after their native district in Hubei. Yuan Hongdao emphasized individual expression and the use of natural and simple language. He famously pronounced that poetry should “only express one’s natural sensibility [*xingling*] and not be restricted by conventional form.”<sup>10</sup> In emphasizing the expression of genuine feelings in simple language, Yuan Hongdao valorized folk songs and village ditties. He also commended Song poetry, anathema to the Archaist school. The poetic language he adopted tends toward the colloquial and easy, the diction being less formal and allusive. The heptasyllabic regulated poem he sent to a friend exemplifies these characteristics:

## C17.2

### Composed at Random: Sent to Master Fang

- With a flask, a bamboo hat, and a cape of straw,  
2 I am skilled at playing Wu melodies and Chu songs.  
The wild crane’s clearheaded because its bones are aged,  
4 Mandarin ducks gray together because their love is deep.  
Pendants worn at the waist are antiques a thousand years old,  
6 The topsy-turvy script written when drunk are waves ten yards long.  
Recently in making verse I have become more attentive,  
8 When it comes to long lines every time I study Dongpo.

[YHDJJJ 2.540]

							偶作贈方子 (ǒu zuò zèng fāng zǐ)
one	flask	one	bamboo hat	one	[measure word]	straw raincoat	一瓶一笠一條蓑 (yì píng yí lì yí tiáo suō)
good at	play	Wu	sound	and	Chu	song	善操吳音與楚歌 (shàn cāo wú yīn yǔ chǔ gē)
wild	crane	spirit	clear	because	bone	old	野鶴神清因骨老 (yě hè shén qīng yīn gǔ lǎo)
mandarin	ducks	head	white	because	love	much	鴛鴦頭白為情多 (yuān yāng tóu bái wèi qíng duō)
waist	between	jade pendant	jade ring	thousand	year	thing	腰間玦珥千年物 (yāo jiān pèi jué qiān nián wù)
drunk	after	topsy-turvy	calligraphy	ten	[Chinese]	yard	醉後顛書十丈波 (zuì hòu diān shū shí zhàng bō)
near	day	compose	poetry	heart	turn	fine	近日裁詩心轉細 (jìn rì cái shī xīn zhuǎn xì)
each	take	long	line	study	Dong-	po	每將長句學東坡 (měi jiāng cháng jù xué Dōng pō)

[Tonal pattern 1a, see p. 172]

Yuan Hongdao's use of the conventional title "Composed at Random" calls attention to the very casualness of the occasion of writing itself. The poem begins by projecting the image of a carefree rustic man, wearing a straw raincoat, enjoying himself with a bottle of wine, and making music. The melodies of Wu and songs of Chu are precisely the kind of regional folk tunes and ditties that he endorses as genuine poetry of the people. Even when Yuan Hongdao has to observe the strict rules of tonal antithesis and syntactic and semantic parallelism required in the regulated form, as in the second and third couplets, he avoids erudite language and allusive imagery. Instead, he draws on birds with common cultural associations to further highlight his natural inclinations. The crane, a symbol of immortality, is here the poet's self-image—old but clearheaded. The mandarin ducks, a symbol of conjugal love, represent the poet's depth of feeling and romantic devotion. In the third couplet, the antique pendants worn at the waist and the free-flowing calligraphy convey the literati culture in which Yuan Hongdao participates; their unique characteristics suggest his individualistic manner. In the closing couplet, the poet explicitly comments on his poetic practice—his turning to the more discursive style of the great Song poet **Su Shi** (style name Dongpo, 1037–1101), one of whose poetic trademarks is his carefree

attitude and inimitable wit.

While Yuan Hongdao's poetic theory proved to be a powerful antidote to the Archaist influence, his poetic practice did not merit much commendation by later critics. The early Qing critic **Zhu Yizun** (1629–1709) castigated the worst of Yuan Hongdao's poetry for being vulgar, facetious, and flippant in expressing his unrestrained inclinations and feelings.<sup>11</sup> Although not all above partisanship, poets of the late Ming and early Qing—such as Chen Zilong (1608–1647), **Qian Qianyi** (1582–1664), and Wu Weiye (1609–1672)—were prolific writers who produced poetry that stood on their own merits. Chen Zilong infused his poetry with intensity of emotion more akin to Tang verse; Qian Qianyi wrote extremely erudite and difficult poems, some reminiscent of the dense, allusive Late Tang style and others of the Song style; and Wu Weiye was acclaimed for his long narrative poems, redolent of his nostalgia for and guilt toward the fallen Ming dynasty. Wang Shizhen (1634–1711), of the younger generation, impressed his contemporaries as a talented poet and theorist. With a preference for Tang poetry, his poetics turn on the concept of *shenyun* (spirit and resonance), which combines the evocation of intuitive perception with a personal tone and placid imagery, as exemplified in the following heptasyllabic quatrain, the first in a series of fourteen:

### C17.3

#### Qinhuai: Miscellaneous Poems

In past years heartbroken on the Moling boat,  
Dreams encircle pavilions by the Qinhuai River.  
After ten days of drizzling rain and wisps of wind,  
The misty scene of lush spring seems like remnants of autumn.

[YYJHLJS 1.226–227]

							秦淮雜詩	(Qín huái zá shī)
year	come	intestine	break	Mo-	ling	boat	年來腸斷秣陵舟	(nián lái cháng duàn Mò líng zhōu)
dream	encircle	Qin-	huai	water	above	pavilion	夢繞秦淮水上樓	(mèng rào Qín huái shuǐ shàng lóu)
ten	day	rain	silk	wind	wisp	inside	十日雨絲風片裏	(shí rì yǔ sī fēng piàn lǐ)
dense	spring	mist	scene	like	remnant	autumn	濃春煙景似殘秋	(nóng chūn yān jǐng sì cán qiū)

[Tonal pattern 1a, see p. 171]

On his visit in 1661, the poet paints a wistful spring scene of the Qinhuai River district, once the magnificent pleasure quarters of the Ming southern capital, Nanjing, where talented scholars and beautiful courtesans shared in the splendor of late Ming culture. In the opening line, the poet creates a sense of distance and history by using the ancient name Moling to refer to the ill-fated city. However, immediately in line 2 the dreams that encircle suggest emotional attachment, an inability to let go of the painful truth of dynastic transition. Even if the pavilions still stand, they seem to be remnants of a vanished past that the poet clings to in a dream. This site of romance was destroyed by the invading Manchus, but the nostalgia for the lost world remains, barely articulated, pervading the scene like fine mist transforming the spring, normally a time of renewal and hope, into the wilted remains of late autumn. Nature, in Wang Shizhen's poetic construct, resonates with human emotion.

The last poem we read by a major poet-critic is a heptasyllabic quatrain by Yuan Mei (1716–1798), the prolific poet who promoted expressing one's "natural sensibility" (*xingling*) in poetry and who wrote more than 4,400 poems in his long life. Disagreeing with the orthodox critic Shen Deqian (1673–1769), who emphasized the moral, didactic function of poetry and Tang poetic models, Yuan Mei advocated naturalness and personal expression in writing poetry above learning and formal and ethical concerns. To him, what one writes should be true to one's feelings and character, one's "native sensibility." Thus, recalling Yuan Hongdao of the Gong'an school, Yuan Mei also appreciated simple folk songs and natural, unadorned diction. He encouraged women to write and publish their poetry, famously taking on scores of female students, to the disapproval of more conservative critics. According to Wang Yingzhi, the modern specialist on Yuan Mei's poetry, his vast corpus can be said to reflect his theory of "native sensibility" in practice.<sup>12</sup> The result is often an affable charm and urbane humor.

#### **C17.4**

##### **Traveling in the Mountains: Miscellaneous Poem**

Rugged and steep for ten *li*, for half a *li* flat,  
Just as one peak says farewell, another bids me welcome!  
Green mountains wrap round me like cocoons,  
I don't believe there could be a pathway ahead.

						山行雜咏	(shān xíng zá yǒng)
ten	li	rugged	steep	half	li	flat	十里崎嶇半里平 (shí lǐ qí qū bàn lǐ píng)
one	peak	just	send	one	peak	welcome	一峰才送一峰迎 (yì fēng cái sòng yì fēng yíng)
green	mountain	like	cocoon	take	person	wrap	青山似繭將人裹 (qīng shān sì jiǎn jiāng rén guǒ)
not	believe	front	head	have	road	walk	不信前頭有路行 (bú xìn qián tóu yǒu lù xíng)

[Tonal pattern IIa, see p. 171]

Yuan Mei records in a realistic and personable tenor his experience of traveling through a mountain range. To convey the ever-changing visual field on the mountain trail as the peaks appear and disappear, he likens them to friends who welcome and see him off one after the other. Being situated in the midst of a mountain range, Yuan Mei describes the experience of being enclosed by the surrounding peaks with the simile of a silkworm being wrapped inside a cocoon, so tightly that he declares wittily that he does not believe there is an opening ahead. Yuan Mei's advocacy of individual, spontaneous, and natural expression in poetry widely encouraged among men and women the practice of recording everyday experience. Whether traveling, staying at home, visiting with friends, or conducting any other activity—the mundane and personal, as well as the sublime and precious—all can become subjects of poetry.

## POETRY AS DIURNAL PRACTICE

### *The Expediency of Poetry in Times of Violence and Disorder*

Chinese poetry has a long tradition of recording the sufferings and disasters caused by war. Poems dating from as early as the sixth century B.C.E. in the ***Shijing*** (*The Book of Poetry*) already describe the hardships of military expeditions; many are set in voices of complaint, as soldiers campaigned far from home for long periods of time and their loved ones were left behind. The ***yuefu*** ballads of the Han also represented these voices of antiwar protest.<sup>13</sup> *Yuefu* poetry, as it evolved in the *shi* form during the Wei–Jin and period of disunion, continued the tendency to represent the sufferings of the downtrodden classes, especially in times of political and social disorder. Originally sung to musical accompaniment, some old *yuefu* song titles clearly indicate the theme of war and military expedition—for example, “Zhan cheng nan” (We Fought



South of the Walls), “Cong jun xing” (Song of Serving in the Army), and “Yin ma chang cheng ku xing” (Song of Letting Horses Drink at the Long Wall Spring). A definite subgroup in the *yuefu* genre is related to the theme of war. Many *yuefu* titles continued to be used in the later periods; they often serve as an index to the subject of the poems.<sup>14</sup> Although generically not considered *yuefu*, Du Fu’s ballads, such as “Bingche xing” (Ballad of Army Carts), “San li” (Three Officers), and “San bie” (Three Separations), and the Late Tang poet **Wei Zhuang**’s (ca. 836–910) long poem “Qin fu yin” (The Lament of the Lady of Qin), on the devastations of the Huang Chao Rebellion (875–884) written in the persona of a woman, are modeled on the *yuefu* song tradition of recounting the destruction of war from the experiences and point of view of the common people.<sup>15</sup> In the Middle Tang, we see an explicit move among poets, notably **Bai Juyi** (772–846) and **Yuan Zhen** (779–831), to develop the *xin yuefu* (new *yuefu*) as a poetry dedicated to social criticism.

Poetry recording the writer’s own experience of war is often traced back to the poem “Beifen shi” (Poem of Lament and Indignation), attributed to the woman poet Cai Yan (176?–early third century), in which the female narrator describes the carnage wrought by the invading **Xiongnu** and her own capture by them at the end of the Later Han dynasty (25–220).<sup>16</sup> But the poet who made poetry into a consistent and effective medium to record personal experience and eyewitness accounts during wartime atrocities was Du Fu.<sup>17</sup> His long poems in the song form, such as “Bei zheng” (Northern Expedition) and “Zi jing fu Fengxian xian yonghuai wubai zi” (From the Capital to Fengxian: Expressing My Feelings in 500 Words), to name the most famous two, recount the devastation of the **An Lushan Rebellion** (755–763) as experienced by him and those whom he came into contact with in the chaos. They remain strong indictments of the brutality of war, all the more powerful and moving for being personal, firsthand experiences. Implicitly or explicitly, Du Fu remained the model of inspiration for poets writing about the horrors of war that they personally witnessed.

The widespread violence during the Ming–Qing dynastic transition in the middle decades of the seventeenth century not only was perpetrated by the Manchus during their military conquest, but also encompassed attacks, pillage, plunder, and destruction carried out during internal uprisings by native groups of local bandits, thugs, rebels, and roving soldiers. The lives of countless men and women, old and young, were displaced and often destroyed regardless of class and region. Recording

the common experience of fleeing from Qing troops, renegade Ming soldiers, and local bandits in this disordered time forms a thematic subgenre of poetry. Many poems are identified explicitly in the title with the term *bi luan* (avoiding, escaping from disorder), *bi bing* (escaping from the soldiers), *bi kou* (escaping from the bandits), or *bi lu* (escaping from the caitiffs). Many of these poem titles also specify one of the two years in the Chinese sexagenary cycle of the Manchu conquest: Jiashen (1644) and Yiyou (1645). The fall of the Ming empire, at first heard as the tragic news that arrived from the distant capital Beijing and later the southern capital Nanjing, materialized into the presence of Manchu forces at the gates of southern cities and on the poets' very doorsteps.

The famous dramatist Li Yu (1611–1680) lived through the worst years of the Ming–Qing transition as a fugitive in the mountains of his native district, Lanxi, and neighboring Jinhua in central-eastern Zhejiang.<sup>18</sup> Several poems in his collection record his experience of disorder and dislocation during the two calamitous years. Even when he was writing about a disaster of such “national” magnitude, Li Yu the indefatigable individualist with a bent for the comic still employs his characteristic tongue-in-cheek style in his narrative:

## **C17.5**



# Recording Disorder in the Year Jiashen [1644]

- In the past I thought that Du Fu's poetry  
 2 Too frequently records chaos and separation.  
 His reflections mixed with intense grief  
 4 Spoil one's deep and serene thoughts.  
 I said to myself that his words were excessive,  
 6 How could it possibly have been like this?  
 Now facing soldiers and garrison troops,  
 8 Whose pillage and plunder reach the unimaginable,  
 I feel Du's poems are abridged—  
 10 They only touch on thirty or forty percent.  
 On behalf of Remonstrance Officer Du,  
 12 Let me supplement another twenty percent.  
 Though there's poetry, one can't bear to tell it all,  
 14 I am afraid the subject is avoided by the humane.<sup>19</sup>  
 When I first heard the din of military drums,  
 16 I wondered if we should try to escape the calamity.  
 But for a whole day it only sounded occasionally,  
 18 After a while it would calm down again.  
 Who would have thought that Heaven hasn't had enough,  
 20 The beacon fires burn ever more intensely by the day.  
 When there are too many bandits, they ask for more soldiers,  
 22 When the soldiers are increased, there is more violence.  
 When the soldiers leave, the bandits return,  
 24 When the bandits come, the soldiers don't show up.  
 The soldiers search for what the bandits left behind,  
 26 The bandits enjoy the soldiers' profits.  
 If one holds back and does not give,  
 28 Livers and brains will all be smeared on the ground.  
 In great confusion everyone abandons home to flee,  
 30 Hoping only to have few burdens.  
 While Bodao is glad he has no son,

- 甲申紀亂 (jiǎ shēn jì luàn)  
 昔見杜甫詩 (xī jiàn dù fǔ shī)  
 多紀離亂事 (duō jì lí luàn shì)  
 感懷雜悲淒 (gǎn huái zá bēi qī)  
 令人減幽思 (lìng rén jiǎn yōu sī)  
 竊謂言者過 (qiè wèi yán zhě guò)  
 豈其遂如是 (qǐ qí suì rú shì)  
 及我遭兵戎 (jí wǒ zāo bīng róng)  
 搶攘盡奇致 (qiǎng rǎng jìn qí zhì)  
 猶覺杜詩略 (yóu jué dù shī lüè)  
 十不及三四 (shí bù jí sān sì)  
 請為杜拾遺 (qǐng wèi dù shí yí)  
 再補十之二 (zài bǔ shí zhī èr)  
 有詩不忍盡 (yǒu shī bù rěn jìn)  
 恐為仁者忌 (kǒng wéi rén zhě jì)  
 初聞鼓鼙喧 (chū wén gǔ pí xuān)  
 避難若嘗試 (bì nán ruò cháng shì)  
 盡日偶然爾 (jìn rì ǒu rán ěr)  
 須臾即平怡 (xū yú jí píng yí)  
 豈知天未厭 (qǐ zhī tiān wèi yàn)  
 烽火日已熾 (fēng huǒ rì yǐ chì)  
 賊多請益兵 (zéi duō qǐng yì bīng)  
 兵多適增厲 (bīng duō shì zēng lì)  
 兵去賊復來 (bīng qù zéi fù lái)  
 賊來兵不至 (zéi lái bīng bú zhì)  
 兵括賊所遺 (bīng guā zéi suǒ yí)  
 賊享兵之利 (zéi xiǎng bīng zhī lì)  
 如其吝不與 (rú qí lìn bù yǔ)  
 肝腦悉塗地 (gān nǎo xī tú dì)  
 紛紛棄家逃 (fēn fēn qì jiā táo)  
 只期少所累 (zhǐ qī shǎo suǒ lèi)  
 伯道慶無兒 (bó dào qīng wú ér)

32	Xiang Ping regrets that he has an offspring. A kingdom's beauty is abandoned to a servant,	向平憾有嗣 國色委菜傭	(xiàng píng hàn yǒu sì) (guó sè wěi cài yōng)
34	While gold ends up in a dirty privy. Going into the mountain, one fears it's not deep enough,	黃金歸溷廁 入山恐不深	(huáng jīn guī hùn cè) (rù shān kǒng bù shēn)
36	But the deeper one goes, the more goblins. In the mountains there are Robin Hoods,	愈深愈多崇 內有綠林豪	(yù shēn yù duō suǐ) (nèi yǒu lǜ lín háo)
38	While back there rebels roam. One is attacked wherever one is,	外有黃金輩 表裏俱受攻	(wài yǒu huáng jīn bèi) (biǎo lǐ jù shòu gōng)
40	First the stomach is injured, then the back. Then we worry when the government soldiers come,	傷腹更傷背 又慮官兵入	(shāng fǔ gèng shāng bèi) (yòu lǜ guān bīng rù)
42	Much of the fluid in the pitcher will be wasted on them. It may yet be easy to satisfy the bandits,	壺漿多所費 賊心猶易厭	(hú jiāng duō suǒ fèi) (zéi xīn yóu yì yàn)
44	But the soldiers' goals are harder to fulfill. Though we encounter robbers in this disordered age,	兵志更難遂 亂世遇萑苻	(bīng zhì gèng nán suì) (luàn shì yù huán fú)
46	We avoid using their methods. Pity those of us in the mountains,	其道利用諱 可憐山中人	(qí dào lì yòng huì) (kě lián shān zhōng rén)
48	Every moment befriending mountain demons. The wealthy die from hunger and cold,	刻刻友魑魅 飢寒死素封	(kè kè yǒu chī mèi) (jī hán sǐ sù fēng)
50	In grief and anxiety even children turn aged. In human life one hopes to meet with the right time,	憂愁老童穉 人生貴逢時	(yōu chóu lǎo tóng zhì) (rén shēng guì féng shí)
52	For if the world is auspicious, people will be auspicious. Since we are people of a disordered age,	世瑞人即瑞 既為亂世人	(shì ruì rén jí ruì) (jì wéi luàn shì rén)
54	We are no different from the ants. In vain we fugitives run hither and thither,	蜉蝣即同類 難民徒紛紛	(fú yóu jí tóng lèi) (nàn mín tú fēn fēn)
56	But how can we escape Heaven's way?	天道胡可避	(tiān dào hú kě bì)

[QSJS 4.2372–2373]

Li Yu begins the poem by explicitly referring to Du Fu's war poems as a foil to the severity of the present situation (lines 1–14). In times of peace, he had thought that Du Fu had exaggerated the turmoil of the An Lushan Rebellion in his poems. But Li Yu now realizes that his previous reading was erroneous. When Du Fu's poems are read against the present peril that Li Yu is experiencing all around him, he finds them to be insufficient expressions of the horrors of war. After noting how he and other local people hesitated when the battles began between whether to stay put or try to escape from the disaster besetting their area (*bi nan*), Li Yu turns to describe what clinched people's decision to leave—the rampant and continual violence inflicted by soldiers and bandits alike. Lines 21–26 are structured with repetitions of “bandits” and “soldiers” that emphasize their mutual substitutability and the recurrence of violence. This repetitive pattern is picked up again in lines 37–46 and produces an overall parodic and theatrical effect. The poem also emphasizes the inversion of values and twists of fate in times of disorder. In lines 31 and 32, Bodao is the

style name of Deng You of the Jin. During the Yongjia period (307–313), when he was trying to escape from a mutiny into the mountains with his small son and nephew, he altruistically gave up his son when he could not protect both children. As a result, he ended up sonless.<sup>20</sup> [Zi]ping is the style name of the Eastern Han scholar Xiang Chang, who disappeared as a wandering recluse after taking care of his children's marriages.<sup>21</sup> Li Yu uses these two allusions to demonstrate the inversion of normative values: in such an age of violence, it would be better not to have children at all. The next couplet (lines 33–34) follows with examples of misfortunes that befall people and things of high value in the social and political chaos of the period. There is no real safety even in the deep mountains, as they are infiltrated by both soldiers and rebels. In the end, the poet could only conclude, in a self-mocking tone, with the grim and fatalistic view that an age of disorder is part of heaven's workings, from which hapless fugitives, like inconsequential ants, cannot escape.

In contrast, the woman poet and critic Wang Duanshu (1621–ca. 1680), a native of Shaoxing (also in present-day Zhejiang), recorded in an entirely serious tone her plight of fleeing with the retreating Ming soldiers from the advancing Qing troops in 1645. She vividly recounts her harrowing experience in the heptasyllabic ancient-style poem “Kunan xing” (Song of Suffering Calamity):

## **C17.6**

### Song of Suffering Calamity

- Before the year Jiashen the common people had plenty,  
2 I remember I lived among groves of brocade flowers.  
Orioles twittered by the curtains as the sun rose high,  
4 Slow to get up and dress, I lingered in the scented bed.  
Once soldiers and horses crossed Xiling,  
6 Books and histories were scattered and thousands of gold  
pieces given up.  
My hair unkempt and wearing plain clothes,  
8 I missed the chance to follow my elder cousin to the  
country village.  
The army orders in Wuning were extremely strict,  
10 Soldiers were not permitted to stay the night in civilian  
houses.  
At this time my heart was full of a myriad worries,  
12 The river wind blew in my face, yet I dared not cry.  
At midnight the tide rose at lightning speed,  
14 Calling my boy who would not rouse, the situation was  
pressing.  
Spending the night on the beach, water lapped our bodies,  
16 Sleeves of light gauze, soaked through in layers.  
Hearing the order we marched with the troops again,  
18 Cold dew reached our bodies before the cock crowed.  
From here on we followed along without stopping,  
20 When the horses neighed we thought it was the bugle's sound.

- 苦難行 (kǔ nán xíng)  
甲申以前民庶豐 (jiǎ shēn yǐ qián mín shù fēng)  
億昔猶在花錦叢 (yì xī yóu zài huā jīn cóng)  
鶯囀簾櫳日影橫 (yīng zhuǎn lián lóng rì yǐng héng)  
慵粧倦起香幃中 (yōng zhuāng juàn qǐ xiāng wéi zhōng)  
一自西陵渡兵馬 (yí zì xī líng dù bīng mǎ)  
書史飄零千金捨 (shū shǐ piāo líng qiān jīn shě)  
髻鬢蓬鬆青素裳 (jì bìn péng sōng qīng sù shang)  
悞逐宗兄走村塾 (wù zhú zōng xiōng zǒu cūn yù)  
武寧軍令甚嚴肅 (wǔ níng jūn lìng shèn yán sù)  
部兵不許民家宿 (bù bīng bù xǔ mín jiā sù)  
此際余心萬斛愁 (cǐ jì yú xīn wàn hú chóu)  
江風括面焉敢哭 (jiāng fēng kuò miàn yān gǎn kū)  
半夜江潮若電入 (bàn yè jiāng cháo ruò diàn rù)  
呼兒不醒勢偏急 (hū ér bù xǐng shì piān jí)  
宿在沙灘水汲身 (sù zài shā tān shuǐ jí shēn)  
輕紗衣袂層層濕 (qīng shā yī mèi céng céng shī)  
聽傳軍令東隊行 (tīng chuán jūn lìng shù dui xíng)  
冷露薄身鵲未鳴 (lěng lù bó shēn jǐ wèi míng)  
是此長隨不知止 (shì cǐ cháng suí bù zhī zhǐ)  
馬嘶疑為畫角聲 (mǎ sī yí wéi huà jiǎo shēng)

	Perspiration poured while tears flowed like blood,	汗下成斑淚成血 (hàn xià chéng bān lèi chéng xuě)
22	Heaven put us in a terrible strait: rivers and bridges have come to an end.	蒼天困人梁河竭 (cāng tiān kùn rén liáng hé jié)
	How could I take these circumstances in my sickly state?	病質何堪受此情 (bìng zhì hé kān shòu cǐ qíng)
24	My shoe heels were ripped from treading, my skin was cracked.	鞋跟踏綻肌膚裂 (xié gēn tà zhàn jī fū liè)
	In Dinghai, waves roared with huge thunderclaps,	定海波濤轟巨雷 (dìng hǎi bō tāo hōng jù léi)
26	Clinging to life, at this point my hopes had turned to ashes.	貪生至此念已灰 (tān shēng zhì cǐ niàn yǐ huī)
	Thinking that my parents were still alive, I burned with worry,	思親猶在心似焚 (sī qīn yóu zài xīn sì fén)
28	Willing to taste the sharp blade, braving death I made my way back.	願淩鋒刃冒死回 (yuàn cān fēng rèn mào sǐ huí)
	At every step my heart beat with fear, the sky was turning to dusk,	步步心驚天將暮 (bù bù xīn jīng tiān jiāng mù)
30	Our derelict boat by mistake went to the Jiang Family Crossing.	敗舟錯打姜家渡 (bài zhōu cuò dǎ jiāng jiā dù)
	Robbed of our travel money, we did not have enough to eat,	行資遇劫食不敷 (xíng zī yù jié shí bù fū)
32	In sobbing wind and weeping rain I felt depressed by the road ahead.	淒風泣雨悲前路 (qī fēng qì yǔ bēi qián lù)
	Though secretly glad that we returned alive from the barricade,	暗喜生從關上歸 (àn xǐ shēng cóng guān shàng guī)
34	Blushing with shame, where could I put my humiliated face?	抱慚羞顏何所倚 (bào nǎn xiū yán hé suǒ yǐ)
	The walls covered with creepers, the gate half open,	牆延蔓草扉半開 (qiáng yán mǎn cǎo fēi bàn kāi)
36	My sister had gone to become a nun, my father was dead.	吾姊出家老父死 (wú zǐ chū jiā lǎo fù sǐ)
	From now on feelings will be distant between the dearest of kin,	骨肉自此情意疏 (gǔ ròu zì cǐ qíng yì shū)
38	For the time being I will dwell to the east of the pond.	僑寓暫且池東居 (qiáo yù zàn qiě chí dōng jū)
	Luckily I still have the <i>Odes</i> and <i>History</i> to enhance my humble hut,	幸得詩書潤茅屋 (xìng dé shī shū rùn máo wū)
40	Out of the way, I don't seek the carriages of the eminent.	僻徑無求顯者車 (pì jìng wú qiú xiǎn zhě chē)
	At dawn pear-blossom rain splashes my secluded window,	曉來梨雨幽窗洒 (xiǎo lái lí yǔ yōu chuāng sǎ)
42	At dusk I borrow fragments of stars to mend the broken tiles.	暮借殘星補破瓦 (mù jiè cán xīng bǔ pò wǎ)
	Occasionally I hear the sound of a wild goose descending from the clouds,	偶聽雲聲送落鴻 (ǒu tīng yún shēng sòng luò hóng)
44	I feel saddened by its sorrowful cries so like my own.	哀其悽惻如象同 (āi qí qī cè rú xiàng tóng)

[YHJ, gexing, 2a–3a]

The poem opens with a picture in the poet's memory of the peaceful life of luxury before the Manchu conquest. Surrounded by feminine images such as "brocade flowers," "curtains," and "scented bed," the female persona is ensconced in the inner quarters, the proper spatial location for women. This dreamlike life of comfort is rudely disrupted by the imminent arrival of invading troops in line 5. The remainder of the poem turns to a narration of the poet's arduous flight from the Manchus, her equally harrowing journey home, and the state of devastation she discovers on her return.

Along with her young son and other kin and townspeople, Wang Duanshu was thrown onto the open road as a fugitive. She records how they fled with the retreating Ming troops when the Qing forces crossed the Qiantang River and took Shaoxing and Ningbo in July 1645.<sup>22</sup> She describes their nightmarish march to Dinghai (on Putuo Island off the Zhejiang coast), sleeping in the open and on wet beaches along the way because they were traveling with troops. They traveled along the northern coast until they reached the island. In line 24, the image of her shoes with heels ripped from trudging poignantly reminds the reader of the difficulty of the march for women with bound feet. After the poet reaches Dinghai, she has almost lost all hope of living. Structurally at almost midpoint in the poem, the narrator, motivated by a strong sense of filial piety to look after her parents, begins to make her journey home through dangerous conditions (lines 27–28). Somewhere along the way, their boat gets lost and they are robbed (lines 30–31). Wang Duanshu probably made her way home sometime in 1646.<sup>23</sup> However, when she arrives back, she learns that her elder sister has left home to become a nun and her father, the loyalist scholar Wang Siren (1575–1646), has committed suicide in Beijing. They both took the two common but radical responses of Ming loyalists to the Manchu conquest. Near the end of the poem, even amid her shattered life, as a learned gentry woman Wang Duanshu is able to find consolation and hope in the remains of Chinese culture, signified by the Confucian canons the *Book of Poetry* and the *Shangshu* (*Classic of History*) that have survived the ravages of war and foreign invasion (line 39). However, the final image of the “wild goose” injects a note of personal loss. Geese flying in formation conventionally denote the intimacy and sense of togetherness between siblings. The poet identifies with the sad cries of a wild goose, which suggests that it has lost its flock. The closure inscribes a sense of personal loss experienced by a “remnant” subject of a fallen dynasty and a survivor who has lost her sister and father.

The experience of loss and dislocation was so complex and traumatic that, for those who had the means and skill, writing must have served as a therapeutic means of regaining some sense of control, order, and personal dignity. The poetic form itself provided the formal regularity of structure, rhyme, and rhythm, into which literate victims of war and violence were able to channel their anguish and seek to manage their trauma.

### *Life Histories: Poetry as Autobiography*

In no other comparable literary tradition was the autobiographical potential so strongly embedded in the orthodox conception of poetry as that in China. The function of poetry to articulate what was in one's heart and on one's mind (***shi yan zhi***)—private emotion as well as moral ambition—facilitated the development of the poetic medium into a versatile vehicle of self-writing and self-recording for educated men and, increasingly in the later periods, for women. This lyric expressiveness was reinforced by the strong subjectivity in the oral tradition, particularly of songs in the first-person voice, which provided much of the corpus that came to form the first canon of poetry, the *Book of Poetry*, privileged as a Confucian classic since the Han period (206 B.C.E.–220 C.E.).

As Stephen Owen has demonstrated so cogently in his seminal study, the autobiographical dimension in Chinese poetry was taken to a sophisticated height early in the literary tradition by **Tao Qian** (365?–427) and later Du Fu.<sup>24</sup> The training in and practice of *shi* and, later, *ci* poetry can be viewed as discursive regimes that produced certain articulations of individual subjectivity in imperial China. Even with the customary omission of personal pronouns in the Chinese poetic language, the common assumption among writers and readers of *shi* poetry of a “single unified lyric speaker”<sup>25</sup>—the poet's persona and subjectivity—informing the poetic utterance ensured the development and persistence of a significant personal and subjective dimension in poetry. It is not surprising that poetry remained, for the majority of educated men and women, the most prevalent medium of self-representation. Situated in the present moment of inscription, the poet, by articulating emotion or intellection (*yanzhi*) in response to a wide range of experiences, both actual and textual, constructed and recorded a multifaceted life history with an eye to a community of contemporary and future readers that often included older versions of the authorial self, who would reread and sometimes revise particular poems or parts of poems, especially at the time of publication. The material accumulation of this process of poetic inscription over time was the making of the individual collection of poetry (*bieji*), which could be edited, arranged in order, and molded into a loose and selective form of self-narrative. As Owen has observed, since the ninth century, poets increasingly undertook the editing of their own poetry collections, creating what he has termed a “species of interior history,” “letting a life story unfold in the author's sequence of responses.”<sup>26</sup>

In the late imperial period, men and women alike exploited this textual



means for constructing a self-record that comprised lyrical moments of interior life, situated in or juxtaposed to external, social occasional events. These records participated in a highly formalistic and conventionalized “grammar” of poetic language. As we have seen in previous chapters, a comprehensive repertory of the basic forms and structures as well as the essential vocabulary and subgenres of the two major genres of *shi* and *ci* had been developed by the Tang and Song periods. Contextualized by titles, often also by prose prefaces and even interlineal explanatory notes by the poet, such poetic self-textualization constituted a quotidian process that would continue as the author’s life progressed. In this practice, writing poetry functioned in a way similar to keeping a diary or personal journal. When the poems were collected and compiled into a chronologically sequenced whole, the resulting text would embody a form of life history.

In poetry collections, the autobiographical narrative frame can be further reinforced by volume and chapter divisions that are named meaningfully, according to stages in the self-narrative. I illustrate this autobiographical practice in the exemplary poetry collection of Gan Lirou (1743–1819), a gentry woman of Fengxin County, in present-day Jiangxi Province, who lived in the era of peace and prosperity referred to as the High Qing.<sup>27</sup> I discuss the overall organization of her collection in relation to the production of a life history through poetry and read examples of her autobiographical voice in selected poems.

Gan Lirou’s remarkable poetry collection is entitled *Yongxuelou gao* (*Drafts from the Pavilion for Chanting About Snow*). As a programmatic and lifelong self-representation by a woman, it epitomizes the many strands of autobiographical practices in late imperial China. Gan Lirou’s autobiographical collection stands both in contrast with and in complement to the many poetic texts by men and women—whether comparably long or exceedingly short, whether complete or fragmented and unfinished—each attempting to articulate and record some local sense of subjectivity.<sup>28</sup> The collection is remarkable not only for demonstrating the sustained effort in self-writing that Gan Lirou made throughout her long life, but also for the way she structured the collection to tell her personal history conceived in the chronological frame of the paradigmatic life cycle of a Chinese woman in the imperial era. Gan Lirou was keenly conscious of the changing roles in her life course, which she recorded conscientiously in her poetry.

In a preface she wrote to her collection when she was seventy-three,



Gan Lirou indicated how she had been stringent in selecting poems from a lifetime of writing to form the text through which she wished to be known by posterity. She stated that she had edited out half of her poems. This process of self-selection and censorship was effectively a means to shape her self-representation.

Gan Lirou arranged her poems in four chapters according to the stages of her life—as a young daughter living at home with her parents and siblings, as a loving wife and dutiful daughter-in-law after marriage, as a bereft widow bringing up her children, and, finally in old age, as a contented mother living in retirement with a successful son. She named each chapter accordingly, beginning with “Xiuyu cao” (Drafts After Embroidering), which consists of poems from her maidenhood; followed by “Kuiyu cao” (Drafts After Cooking), of poems from her married life; “Weiwang cao” (Drafts by the One Who Has Not Died), of poems from her widowhood; and finally “Jiuyang cao” (Drafts by One Who Lives in Retirement with Her Son), of poems written while she lived with her younger son after he had passed the *jinshi* examination and obtained official appointment as a magistrate. Each chapter title is meant to capture the most significant womanly “occupation” or status for each phase: embroidering is a young girl’s work and training in feminine skills, food preparation in daily life and on ritual occasions is the duty of a married woman, the widow is the “one who has not died” (after the death of her husband), and living in retirement with one’s son is a woman’s fulfillment in old age. As the autobiographical record of her everyday and emotional life over time, this edited collection of over 1,000 poems bears witness to the vital role that writing played throughout the various stages of one woman’s life.

The first poem in Gan Lirou’s collection is a pentasyllabic quatrain, “On the Full Moon.” Written at age six, it was a poetic exercise prompted and then probably corrected and improved by her parents and elder siblings, a piece the poet treasured and preserved as the opening poem in her collection:

### **C17.7**

#### **On the Full Moon: Written at Age Six**

Who sent Wu Gang’s axe  
Clearly to chop it exactly round?

How come not long after it's been full  
Again a crescent forms where it has waned?

[YXLG 1.1a]

						咏圓月七歲作 (yǒng yuán yuè qī suì zuò)
who	send	Wu	Gang	axe	誰使吳剛斧	(shéi shǐ wú gāng fǔ)
divide	bright	cut	just	round	分明削正圓	(fēn míng xiāo zhèng yuán)
do	what	full moon	not yet	long	如何望未久	(rú hé wàng wèi jiǔ)
missing	place	again	form	line	缺處又成弦	(quē chù yòu chéng xián)

[Tonal pattern I, see p. 170]

The moon, a ubiquitous trope in the poetic tradition, recurs throughout Gan Lirou's entire collection, varying in its many emotional and cultural valences in the context of her life course. Here, in the first preserved effort by Gan Lirou, a child's curiosity about the waxing and waning of the moon is animated by reference to the legend of the mythical figure Wu Gang cutting away at the 5,000-foot osmanthus tree on the moon.<sup>29</sup>

Gan Lirou's happy childhood and adolescence were soon devastated by a series of successive deaths in the family. First an elder brother died away from home, then her only sister, followed by her mother when Gan Lirou was eighteen. She wrote many poems mourning the loss of companionship and sisterly intimacy and of maternal guidance and counsel in her journey through life. "Weeping for Elder Sister" is inscribed with memories of embroidering and writing poetry together with her sister—two activities young ladies of elite households often performed together:

### C17.8

#### Weeping for Elder Sister

In the clear night I still remember when we chatted quietly.

- 2 When you were alive, I feared we would part, with little chance to be together.

In our inner chambers, how could we know we'd be separated by death?

- 4 In my heart, I could only pine for your visits home.

Sisters linking verses were like the best of friends,

- 6 I followed my companion, at dawn or dusk we embroidered together.  
Now in front of the mirror I am startled to see myself standing alone,  
8 Why must I see a pair of swallows fluttering by the curtains?

[YXLG 1.20a]

							哭姊 (kū zǐ)
clear	night	still	recall	quiet	talk	time	清宵猶憶靜談時 (qīng xiāo yóu yì jìng tán shí)
alive	fear	group	part	each other	gather	rare	生恐群分相聚稀 (shēng kǒng qún fēn xiāng jù xī)
inner	chamber	how	know	have	death	separate	閨閣那知有死別 (guī gé nǎ zhī yǒu sǐ bié)
heart	feeling	only	manage	look for	come	return	心情只管盼來歸 (xīn qíng zhǐ guǎn pàn lái guī)
link	verse	elder sister	younger sister	together	good	friend	聯詩姊妹同良友 (lián shī zǐ mèi tóng liáng yǒu)
follow	company	dawn	dusk	together	embroider	curtain	隨伴朝昏共繡幃 (suí bàn zhāo hūn gòng xiù wéi)
facing	mirror	startled	look at	person	alone	stand	對鏡驚看人獨立 (duì jìng jīng kàn rén dú lì)
flutter	curtain	sense of contrariness	see	swallows	pair	fly	撲簾偏見燕雙飛 (pū lián piān jiàn yàn shuāng fēi)

[Tonal pattern 1a, see p. 172]

Gan Lirou had feared only that she and her sister would be separated during their lives by marriage, when they would leave their natal home for their husbands' families. This makes the untimely and eternal parting by death all the more poignant. After recalling their companionship as young girls in the inner quarters, the poem ends with the speaker gazing at her image in front of the mirror alone, without her sister. The image of paired swallows, conventionally signifying lovers, is used as a foil for the speaker's loss of her companion.

After the three-year mourning period for her mother, Gan Lirou was married to Xu Yuelü, in a match her parents had made. Uncharacteristically for a young woman, Gan Lirou composed her own version of "Hastening the Bride's Toilet," a celebratory verse usually written by guests as the bride is fetched from her home. Herself the bride about to be fetched, she used this wedding poem to record her experience of this important rite of passage. As she puts on her bridal

gown and headdress, she laments that her mother is no longer alive to perform the custom of tying the sash for her:<sup>30</sup>

### C17.9

#### Hastening the Bride's Toilet

Pearl headdress and patterned robe suddenly put on my body,  
In marrying, I take leave of my family and part from those I love.  
The way of the daughter comes to an end, that of the wife begins,  
But there is no mother to tie my sash with her own hands.

[YXLG 1.35a]

							催粧	(cuī zhuāng)
pearl	headdress	image	robe	suddenly	add	body	珠冠象服驟加身	(zhū guān xiàng fú zhòu jiā shēn)
go out	chamber	take leave	home	separate	those whom	close	出閣辭家別所親	(chū gé cí jiā bié suǒ qīn)
daughter	way	announce	end	wife	way	begin	女道告終婦道始	(nǚ dào gào zhōng fù dào shǐ)
what	have not	personal	hand	tie	sash	person	奈無親手結縵人	(nài wú qīn shǒu jié lí rén)

[Tonal pattern 1a, see p. 171]

For ten years, Gan Lirou enjoyed a companionate marriage. She gave birth to two sons and two daughters. She not only was a capable and supportive wife but also served her parents-in-law in exemplary fashion and kept in touch with her father and younger brother by letters and epistolary poems. When her husband was home, the two of them also composed many linked verse together. The pentasyllabic regulated poem “Night in the Boudoir,” one of many such joint efforts by the young couple, demonstrates the romantic and poetic compatibility between them.

### C17.10

#### Night in the Boudoir

- Your lovely sentiments transmitted in ink,  
2 My good friend excels in poems and songs. (Baihuang)  
Fragrant tunes rise from the zithers,  
4 The tinkling gems enhance the jadelike beauty. (Ruyu)  
As the temple bell sounds amid hushed bamboos,  
6 The moon's reflection rises late on the curtain. (Baihuang)

You want to put all your efforts into the vocation of a thousand years,  
 8 Deep in the night, not yet gone to bed. (Ruyu)

[YXLG 2.34b–35a]

					閨夜	(guī yè)
lovely	feeling	transmit	quill	ink	芳情傳翰墨	(fāng qíng chuán hàn mò)
good	friend	skill in	poem	song	良友擅詩詞(拜璜)	(liáng yǒu shàn shī cí [Baihuang])
<i>qin</i> -zither	<i>se</i> -zither	sound	fragrant	rhyme	琴瑟鳴香韻	(qín sè míng xiāng yùn)
tinkling	jade	support	jade	posture	琳瑯捧玉姿(如玉)	(lín láng pěng yù zī [Ruyu])
bell	sound	knock	bamboo	quiet	鐘聲敲竹靜	(zhōng shēng qiāo zhú jìng)
moon	reflection	ascend	curtain	late	月影上簾遲(拜璜)	(yuè yǐng shàng lián chí [Baihuang])
want	complete	thousand	autumn	vocation	欲竟千秋業	(yù jìng qiān qiū yè)
deep	night	not yet	sleep	time	深宵未寐時(如玉)	(shēn xiāo wèi mèi shí [Ruyu])

[Tonal pattern II, see p. 171]

Alternately composing couplets for the same poem, husband and wife shared many conjugal moments and signed their courtesy names (Baihuang and Ruyu, respectively) to the couplets they each composed. Her husband initiates the poem by demonstrating his appreciation of his wife's expression of love in skillful poetic composition. Gan Lirou's first response emphasizes their conjugal harmony and mutual pleasures by using a standard image for husband and wife, the two types of zither—*qin* and *se*. The synesthesia of the visual, aural, and olfactory senses in the line "Fragrant tunes rise from the zithers" conveys the quality of and harmony in their relationship. While her husband continues in the next couplet to bring out the nocturnal universe that is exclusively theirs, Gan Lirou ends the poem by reference to the familiar theme of their mutual dedication to his studies for the examination late into the night. This is also the valued time of their being in each other's exclusive company after the children and elders have gone to bed.

Tragically, her husband died in his thirties while studying away from home, and Gan Lirou was left a widow to bring up her small children and care for her mother-in-law. During the three-year mourning period, she wrote many poems grieving for her husband. Many of these poems make explicit the contrast between their happiness together in the past and her solitude in the present. Cast in the emotionally expressive *sao* style (chap. 2), "Expressing My Feelings" melds the external desolation of a funeral wake with the young widow's passionate grief:

## C17.11

### Expressing My Feelings

	Dusk descends, alas, the cold seeps into the flesh.	述懷 (shù huái)
		將欲黃昏兮寒侵肌 (jiāng yù huáng hūn xi hán qīn jī)
2	The empty room is desolate, alas, I cannot bear my grief.	空房寂寞兮不勝悲 (kòng fáng jì mò xi bú shèng bēi)
	Staring in a daze from the boudoir, alas, I watch for your return.	倚閨凝望兮盼君歸 (yǐ guī níng wàng xi pàn jūn guī)
4	Going out to the courtyard steps, alas, the chilly wind blows.	出步庭階兮淒風吹 (chū bù tíng jiē xi qī fēng chuī)
	Going back into the hall, alas, I lean on your spirit banner.	重入中堂兮倚靈幃 (chóng rù zhōng táng xi yǐ líng wéi)
6	My orphaned sons and little daughters, alas, weep holding onto my robe.	孤兒幼女兮泣牽衣 (gū ér yòu nǚ xi qì qiān yī)
	I carry them back into the room, alas, in the dim reflection of the lamp.	抱攜歸房兮燈影微 (bào xié guī fáng xi dēng yǐng wēi)
8	Holding in my grief, I put my face on the pillow, alas, tears stream down.	含悲伏枕兮淚暗垂 (hán bēi fú zhěn xi lèi àn chuí)
	Vaguely I dream of you, alas, like in the old days.	恍惚夢君兮如昔時 (huǎng hū mèng jūn xi rú xī shí)
10	Awakened I recite “The Cock Crows,” alas, but you don’t hear at all the words of dawn.	醒賦雞鳴兮奚不聞昧旦詞 (xǐng fù jī míng xi xī bù wén mèi dàn cí)

[YXLG 3.4a]

It is dusk, the room is empty, and the young widow is emotionally devastated while keeping wake by her husband’s spirit tablet with the small children. Her agitated emotional state is indicated by her movement of going out from the inside to the courtyard and then back again. In the final line, Gan Lirou alludes to the poem “The Cock Crows” in the *Book of Poetry*, which was interpreted as referring to a virtuous royal consort who woke up the ruler for his court audience when she heard the cock crowing at dawn.<sup>31</sup> The poem has become a standard reference for a virtuous wife who attends to her husband’s affairs. The allusion emphasizes that her deceased husband can no longer heed her counsel. Her longing for him can be sought only in dreams.

After the travails of a long widowhood, Gan Lirou was finally vindicated

by her younger son's success in passing the highest examination and obtaining an official position. With all her duties fulfilled, Gan Lirou felt she had come to terms with herself. Her poems from this period reveal that she had begun to enjoy a leisurely life in old age, finding pleasure in nature's delights, creativity in practicing the literati arts, and peace in spiritual contemplation.

## C17.12

### Recited at Random

- In leisure, I roll out a scroll and open the window,  
 2 A painting in hand, I face the twilight in the breeze.  
 The world seems small when one takes a broad view,  
 4 Looking back, one recognizes the mistakes of the past and present.  
 Only when I practice meditation do I realize an undefiled mind,  
 6 Only when I copy sutras do I know there's a crucial point in the  
 brush.  
 When the myriad sounds quiet down thoughts become tranquil,  
 8 The moon moves pure shadows onto the screen.

[YXLG 4.27a]

						偶吟	(ǒu yín)
leisure	unroll	ivory	scroll	open	window leaf	閑披牙軸啟窗扉	(xián pī yá zhóu qǐ chuāng fēi)
hold	painting	facing	wind	in front of	evening ray	捧卷臨風對夕暉	(pěng juǎn lín fēng duì xī huī)
release	eyes	see	come	heaven	earth small	放眼看來天地小	(fàng yǎn kàn lái tiān dì xiǎo)
turn	head	recognize	reach	past	present wrong	回頭認到昨今非	(huí tóu rèn dào zuó jīn fēi)
manage	meditation	begin	perceive	heart	have not dirt	理禪始覺心無垢	(lǐ chán shǐ jué xīn wú gòu)
write	sutra	only then	know	brush	have pivot	書葉方知筆有機	(shū yè fāng zhī bǐ yǒu jī)
ten thousand sounds	quiet	time	people	thought	quiet	萬籟寂時人意靜	(wàn lài jì shí rén yì jìng)
moon	move	pure	shadow	onto	screen curtain	月移清影上屏幃	(yuè yí qīng yǐng shàng píng wéi)

[Tonal pattern 1a, see p. 172]

The persona in “Recited at Random” expresses a philosophical attitude toward life. One’s perspectives change, depending on how one looks at phenomena. In the everyday life of old age, Buddhist practices help one to recognize worldly mistakes and purify the mind. Gan Lirou turned to spiritual practice as she grew old.

### *Poetry and the Pleasures of Everyday Life*

Poetry as a cultural force indeed pervaded the quotidian life of literate women and men in the Ming and Qing. This is amply reflected in the large repertory of poems on the pleasures of everyday life we find in poetry collections from this period, which offer an uplifting contrast to the poems recording experiences of violence and disorder examined previously. This chapter concludes, then, with two poems by women at different ends of the life course that afford some insight into this ubiquitous dimension of Chinese poetic discourse.

#### **C17.13**

#### **On a Summer Day: Dwelling in the Mountains**

- The hills are quiet, just right for hot weather,  
2 Wind through the pines enters into clear dreams.  
Rain colors fly across precipitous cliffs,  
4 On ancient trees sob the sound of cicadas.  
Stitching embroidery has been my lesson in recent years,  
6 Watching clouds—sentiments beyond phenomena.  
If one does not know that the dusty world is faraway,  
8 In vain one will try to prove No Rebirth.

[GGZJ 1.20b]

					夏日山居	(xià rì shān jū)
mountain	quiet	inclined to	suitable	hot weather	山靜偏宜暑	(shān jìng piān yí shǔ)
pine	wind	enter	dream	pure	松風入夢清	(sōng fēng rù mèng qīng)
precipitous	cliff	fly	rain	color	危岩飛雨色	(wēi yán fēi yǔ sè)
ancient	tree	sob	cicada	sound	古樹咽蟬聲	(gǔ shù yè chán shēng)
prick	embroider	year	come	lesson	刺繡年來課	(cì xiù nián lái kè)
watch	cloud	thing	outside	feeling	看雲物外情	(kàn yún wù wài qíng)
not	know	dust	market	far	不知塵市遠	(bù zhī chén shì yuǎn)
idle	to be	prove	no	birth	聊為證無生	(liáo wéi zhèng wú shēng)

[Tonal pattern I, see p. 171]

Judged from the aesthetics of poetic craft, the pentasyllabic regulated poem “On a Summer Day: Dwelling in the Mountains,” by the young Yan Liu (seventeenth or eighteenth century), is obviously inspired by and modeled after the Buddhist-inflected “nature” poems of the Tang poet



**Wang Wei** (701–761), but one that also embodies gendered experience. Yan Liu is learning to embroider and to write poetry, requisite skills of cultured young women of gentry families in this period. On the formal level, traces of literary practice are apparent. The poem has the required rhymes and tonal antithesis; the prescribed parallelism of the second and third couplets is largely met on the syntactic but not quite on the semantic and grammatical levels. She borrows freely from the well-known vocabulary and syntax of Wang Wei's famous regulated verses: the sound of "wind through the pines," "watching clouds," "beyond phenomena," and the verb *ye* (sob, choke), including inverting its syntactic position with the subject "sound of cicadas" in line 4. But the one thing that is new in this poem is the motif of embroidering and its seemingly natural place in a woman's everyday life, which encompasses seamlessly the enjoyment of nature, the art of poetry, women's work, and spiritual contemplation.

Similarly, in "Recited While Sick," the Manchu woman Mengyue, a widow for most of her life, fully exploits the attributes of femininity conventionally associated with women's illness and the spatial location of the inner quarters in her self-representation:<sup>32</sup>

#### **C17.14**

##### **Recited While Sick**

Not aware that my fingers have turned slim, I find the dust heavy,  
2 Surprised by the robe's length, I didn't realize that my shoulders had grown thin.

With empty mind, I quietly chew over the flavor of the *Odes* and  
*History*,  
4 In the silent room, I frequently smell the fragrance of ink.  
Since ancient times the zither strings have emitted unusual sounds,  
6 So many wild phrases when I put the brush to write pure poetry.  
From the flavor experienced in illness I attain true inspiration,  
8 I savor slowly the hidden leisure beyond things.

[GGZX 5.17a]

							病中詠	(bìn zhōng yǒng)
not	feel	finger	delicate	dislike	dust	heavy	不覺指纖塵重	(bù jué zhǐ xiān chén zhòng)
who	know	shoulder	thin	surprised	robe	long	那知肩瘦訝衣長	(nǎ zhī jiān shòu yà yī cháng)
heart	empty	bland	chew	<i>Odes</i>	<i>History</i>	flavor	心虛淡嚼詩書味	(xīn xū dàn jiáo shī shū wèi)
room	quiet	frequent	hear	quill	ink	fragrant	室靜頻聞翰墨香	(shì jìng pín wén hàn mò xiāng)
zither	strange	emit	string	sound	since	ancient	琴怪出弦音自古	(qín kuài chū xián yīn zì gǔ)
poetry	pure	put down	brush	line	many	wild	詩清下筆句多狂	(shī qīng xià bǐ jù duō kuáng)
illness	middle	nourish	flavor	obtain	true	interest	病中滋味得真趣	(bìng zhōng zī wèi dé zhēn qù)
thing	outside	secluded	leisure	finely	finely	taste	物外幽閑細細嘗	(wù wài yōu xián xì xì cháng)

[Rules of tonal patterning not observed]

The effect of the emphasis on the femininity of illness in the opening couplet does not result in the image of a fragile beauty languishing in sorrow. Instead, the persona turns to “chew over” the meaning of the *Book of Poetry* and *Classic of History*, with a mind free from mundane cares in a quiet environment. Her mind/intellect is rendered sensually as taste: she “chews” the classics, is inspired by the “flavor” of illness, and “savors ... hidden leisure.” Her intellectual discernment rendered through the metaphor of taste almost fuses with her sense of smell and motion when she writes uninhibited poems with the fragrant ink. She claims that these “wild” lines of poetry are akin to extraordinary music on the ancient instrument, and concludes that it is through illness that she has reached “inspiration” and spiritual transcendence—the “hidden leisure beyond things.” This attitude takes her beyond a mundane experience of illness to a spiritual dimension in everyday existence. Such is the transformative power of poetry.

Grace S. Fong

#### NOTES

1. A comprehensive catalog is Hu Wenkai, *Lidai funü zhuzuo kao* (*Women's Writings Through the Ages*) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1985). For the database and digitized texts of ninety-six collections, see Ming–Qing Women's Writings: A Joint Digitization Project Between McGill University and Harvard-Yenching Library, Harvard University (<http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/mingqing>).

2. The compilation of Ming *shi* poetry was begun in 1990: *Quan Ming shi* (*Complete Shi Poetry of the Ming*), 3 vols. to date (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1990–).

3. Dorothy Ko discusses the publishing boom in this period and its effects on the reading public in her seminal work *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1994), 29–53.

4. There is by now a substantial body of scholarship on women's literary culture in the Ming and Qing. For an up-to-date bibliography, see Wilt Idema and Beata Grant, *The Red Brush: Writing Women of Imperial China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2004).

5. For an overview of the major figures and their theories, see Zhang Jian, *Ming Qing wenxue*

*piping* (Ming–Qing Literary Criticism) (Taipei: Guojia chubanshe, 1983), and James J. Y. Liu, *Chinese Theories of Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975).

6. Due to limitations of length, this chapter does not include poetry written by men and women during the increasing social and political instabilities caused by internal rebellions and European incursions in the nineteenth century, which augmented the tradition of poetic witnessing and personal recording.

7. On Li Mengyang's poetic theory and practice, see Yoshikawa Kōjirō, *Five Hundred Years of Chinese Poetry, 1150–1650: The Chin, Yuan, and Ming Dynasties*, trans. John Timothy Wixted (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989), 140–149.

8. Charles Egan discusses a frontier poem, "Following the Army" (C10.11), in chapter 10.

9. Guo Qingfan, ed., "Xiaoyao you" (Free and Easy Wandering), in *Zhuangzi jishi* (*Zhuangzi, with Collected Commentaries*) (Taipei: Qunyutang chubanshe, 1991), 1:6, n. 3.

10. Yuan Hongdao made this statement in describing his younger brother Zhongdao's poetry, in "Xu Xiaoxiu shi" (Preface to Xiaoxiu's Poetry), in *Yuan Hongdao ji jianjiao* (*The Works of Yuan Hongdao, with Annotations and Collations*) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1981), 1:184.

11. Zhu Yizun, *Jingzhiju shihua* (*Remarks on Poetry from the Dwelling of Quiet Intent*) (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1998), 2:478–479.

12. *Yuan Mei quanji* (*The Complete Works of Yuan Mei*), ed. Wang Yingzhi (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1993), 1:4.

13. Anne M. Birrell, "Anti-War Ballads and Songs," in *Popular Songs and Ballads of Han China* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), 116–127.

14. See examples in the comprehensive anthology of *yuefu* poetry compiled by Guo Maoqian in the Song: *Yuefu shiji*, 4 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979). Joseph Allen focuses on the intratextuality of the *yuefu* in *In the Voice of Others: Chinese Music Bureau Poetry* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1992).

15. Wei Zhuang, "The Lament of the Lady of Ch'in," trans. Robin D. S. Yates, in *Sunflower Splendor: Three Thousand Years of Chinese Poetry*, ed. Wu-chi Liu and Irving Yucheng Lo (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975), 267–281.

16. For a translation and discussion of authorship, see Hans Frankel, "Cai Yan and the Poems Attributed to Her," *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 5, no. 2 (1983): 133–156.

17. The most comprehensive study of Du Fu's life through his poetry is William Hung, *Tu Fu: China's Greatest Poet* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1969).

18. On Li Yu's drama, fiction, and prose writings, see Patrick Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988).

19. The meaning of this couplet is ambiguous. Li Yu seems to be suggesting that he now understands that those who are humane do not have the heart to record the violence and cruelty of war in exhaustive, graphic details.

20. *Hanyu da cidian* (*Great Dictionary of the Chinese Language*), 1.1266B.

21. *Hanyu da cidian*, 3.138A.

22. For the Manchu troop movements and Ming loyalist resistance, see Lynn Struve, *The Southern Ming, 1644–1662* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1984), 75.

23. The more cohesive local resistance movement in Shaoxing was able to drive out the Qing occupation swiftly, and the Ming restoration movement established the prince of Lu as regent in Shaoxing a month or two later. Thus began the Longwu reign (1645–1646) (Struve, *Southern Ming*, 76).

24. Stephen Owen, "The Self's Perfect Mirror: Poetry as Autobiography," in *The Vitality of the Lyric Voice: Shih Poetry from the Late Han to the T'ang*, ed. Shuen-fu Lin and Stephen Owen (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986), 71–102.

25. Maija Bell Samei, *Gendered Persona and Poetic Voice: The Abandoned Woman in Early Chinese Song Lyrics* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2004), 98.

26. Owen, "Self's Perfect Mirror," 73.

27. Gan Lirou's autobiographical poetry writing is discussed in Grace S. Fong, *Herself an*

Author: *Gender, Writing, and Agency in Late Imperial China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), chap. 1.

28. For comparison with a male poet's self-narrative in his poetry collection, see Grace S. Fong, "Inscribing a Sense of Self in Mother's Family: Hong Liangji's (1746–1809) Memoir and Poetry of Remembrance," *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 27 (2005): 33–58. The autobiographical impulse is also strongly articulated in women's suicide poems and their accompanying autobiographical prefaces, as discussed in Grace S. Fong, "Signifying Bodies: The Cultural Significance of Suicide Writings by Women in Ming–Qing China," *Nan Nü: Men, Women, and Gender in Early and Imperial China* 3, no. 1 (2001): 105–142.

29. On the legend of Wu Gang and the moon, see Duan Chengshi (d. 863), *Youyang zazu* (*Miscellanea from Youyang*) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), 9.

30. This ritual is mentioned in "Dong shan" (Mao no. 156): "A girl is going to be married ... /Her mother has tied the strings of her girdle" (Arthur Waley, trans., *The Book of Songs* [New York: Grove Press, 1978], 117).

31. "The Cock Crows" (Mao no. 96), in James Legge, trans., *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 4, *The She King* (Taipei: Wenshizhe chubanshe, 1971), 52, 150–151.

32. It is noteworthy that the Manchus, both men and women, eagerly participated in the Han Chinese culture of poetry after the conquest.

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Yan Dichang 嚴迪昌. *Qingshi shi* 清詩史 (*History of Qing Poetry*). Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 2002.

Zhang Jian 張建. *Ming Qing wenxue piping* 明清文學批評 (*Ming–Qing Literary Criticism*). Taipei:

Guojia chubanshe, 1983.

Zhu Yi'an 朱易安. *Zhongguo shixueshi: Mingdai juan* 中國詩學史：明代卷 (*History of Chinese Poetics: The Ming Period*). Xiamen: Lujiang chubanshe, 2002.

## A Synthesis

### Rhythm, Syntax, and Vision of Chinese Poetry

Line configuration and poetic vision are probably the two most important subjects of inquiry in traditional Chinese poetry criticism. The study of line configuration, called *jufa* (sentence rules), is essentially an analysis of how monosyllabic and disyllabic words form a poetic line or couplet to create certain unique rhythm and aesthetic effect. Poetic vision, called *yixiang/yijing* (idea-image/idea-scape), refers to a heightened presentation of outer and inner realities, characterized by the “beyondness” of one kind or another—“the meaning beyond words” (*yan wai zhi yi*), “the image beyond images” (*xiang wai zhi xiang*), “the scene beyond scenes” (*jing wai zhi jing*),” and the like. The traditional study of poetic vision is usually an impressionistic description of such “beyondness” in the rarefied terms of aesthetics.

Bifurcated as they seem, concrete line configuration and nebulous poetic vision are inextricably intertwined. While line configuration provides the foundation for the creation of poetic vision, poetic vision breathes life into poetic lines, making them dynamic and engaging. Traditional Chinese critics became aware of this connection long ago. As early as the sixth century, **Zhong Rong** (ca. 469–518) pointed out the connection between pentasyllabic lines and new pleasurable, inexhaustible tastes of poetry.<sup>1</sup> More than a millennium later, the Qing critic **Liu Xizai** (1813–1881) went one step further to explore the deeper connection between internal rhythms of tetrasyllabic, pentasyllabic, and heptasyllabic lines and different poetic visions.<sup>2</sup> In a way, our close reading of the 143 poems in this anthology is an innovative continuation of this millennia-old critical endeavor. Drawing from modern linguistic and

aesthetic theories, many of us have sought to understand why poetic lines, if configured in certain manners, can yield ineffable aesthetic experience. Here I shall synthesize our findings and present a broad outline for a systematic study of the rhythms, syntax, and visions in Chinese poetry.

## **RETHINKING *JUFA*: TOWARD AN INTEGRATION OF RHYTHM AND SYNTAX**

Rhythm and syntax are two principal issues in the study of line configuration in Chinese poetry. Rhythm primarily concerns the oral-aural dimension and syntax primarily the spatiotemporal-logical dimension in the ordering of words.

In studying line configuration, traditional Chinese scholars were preoccupied with rhythm to the neglect of syntax. Six Dynasties critics like **Zhi Yu** (d. 211) and **Liu Xie** (ca. 465–ca. 522) recognized that major genres and subgenres each have their distinctive line types. Some employ lines of fixed length (trisyllabic, tetrasyllabic, pentasyllabic, heptasyllabic, and so on), and others feature lines of irregular length. These two broad categories of poetry have been labeled *qiyān shī* (poetry of equal-character lines) and *zāyān shī* (poetry of variable-character lines), respectively. These critics also held that this rich variety of line types resulted from efforts to accord poetic speech with different external musical rhythms.<sup>3</sup> Beginning from the Song dynasty, critics became aware of internal line rhythm that arises from a fixed pattern of mandatory pauses between monosyllabic words and disyllabic words. This internal rhythm is semantic in the sense that it predetermines how characters are to be clustered to generate meaning. Consequently, it not only intensifies our experience of the sound but also contributes to the sense of poetry. A clear recognition of this crucial semantic importance did not occur until Qing times, when Liu Xizai and others began to explore the aesthetic implications of various *shī* rhythms.

The neglect of syntax by Chinese critics has much to do with the Chinese language itself. As a notion originating in Western linguistics, syntax denotes the spatiotemporal-logical grid in which words are arranged. Chinese is a noninflectional language, and its words are not cast into a fixed spatiotemporal-logical relationship by tense, voice, and other inflectional tags. Syntactic linkage is effected by a well-ordered, readily discernible semantic rhythm, with or without grammatical function



words (*xuzi*). This semantic rhythm normally gives the reader ample useful hints on how to cluster words to form a meaningful sentence. Hence Chinese philology has no notion of syntax as a prescriptive spatiotemporal-logical grid of words. So it is only natural that traditional Chinese scholars would not seek to probe the inner workings of poetic vision through syntactic analysis.

The neglect of syntactic analysis is highly regrettable. Poetic vision is an intense mental experience induced by words and images cast in an extraordinary order. An examination of poetic syntax, therefore, is crucial to any attempt to illuminate the inner workings of poetic vision. Since the publication of Ma Jianzhong's (1845–1900) *Ma shi wen tong* (*Mr. Ma's Grammar*) in 1898, Chinese linguists have worked assiduously to construct a syntax-based Chinese grammar. Thanks to their endeavors, we now have a good enough knowledge of Chinese syntax for investigating the linguistic foundation for ineffable poetic vision. Here, by integrating the traditional *jufa* studies with modern syntactic analysis, I shall outline the evolution of Chinese poetic rhythms and syntax and assess their efficacy in evoking poetic visions.<sup>4</sup>

## **TWO BASIC SYNTACTIC CONSTRUCTIONS: SUBJECT + PREDICATE AND TOPIC + COMMENT**

In common as well as poetic speech, Chinese words are organized into sentences according to two competing yet complementary principles: spatiotemporal-logical and analogical-associational.

If organized according to the first principle, words exhibit a partial or complete subject + predicate construction. The subject + predicate construction consists of an agent (subject) and the agent's state or action (predicate) that may or may not involve a recipient (object). A complete subject + predicate construction enacts or implies a temporal-causal sequence from an agent to its action and to the action's recipient. In English and other Western languages, this construction is the primary framework for both poetic and common speech. But in Chinese, this construction is far less important or pervasive than in English. In poetry in particular, it is merely one—sometimes the lesser—of the two ways that words are organized.

It should be noted that a typical Chinese subject + predicate construction is far less restrictive than its English counterpart. Neither subject nor predicate is fixed in time and space, as they are in Western



languages by inflectional tags for tense, case, number, gender, and other aspects. Thus the reader has to contextualize, with or without the aid of grammatical function words. This process of contextualization compels the Chinese reader to intensely engage with depicted realities and feel as though they were really unfolding right before his eyes. This rich poetic potential of Chinese subject + predicate construction, made possible by the absence of inflection, has not gone unnoticed by Western critics. It was singled out by two prominent American critics, Ernest Fenollosa (1853–1908) and Ezra Pound (1885–1972), to support their assertions about the superiority of Chinese as a medium for poetry.<sup>5</sup>

The other syntactic construction is called topic + comment by scholars of Chinese language.<sup>6</sup> Instead of an active agent responsible for an action or a condition, the “topic” refers to an object, a scene, or an event “passively” being observed. The “comment” refers to an implied observer’s response to the topic. As a rule, the response tells us more about the observer’s state of mind than about the topic. The absence of a predicative verb between the topic and the comment aptly underscores their relationship as noncontiguous and noncausal. The noncontiguous topic and comment are yoked together by the implied observer through analogy or association, in a moment of intense observation. The result is quite different from that of a temporal cognitive process. Topic + comment tends to reactivate the vortex of images and feelings, previously experienced by the observer, in the mind of the reader. Given its extraordinary evocative power, it is no surprise that this construction has been preferred for lyrical expression since the time of the *Shijing* (*The Book of Poetry*).

## THE EVOLUTION OF CHINESE POETIC RHYTHMS AND SYNTAX

As shown in the preceding seventeen chapters, the birth of each major poetic genre or subgenre was marked by the formation of one or more distinctive semantic rhythms. The emergence of new semantic rhythms, in turn, led to a reconfiguration of both subject + predicate and topic + comment constructions. What follows is a brief outline of the most important reconfigurations of these two constructions over the millennia.

### *Tetrasyllabic Shi Poetry*

We begin with the semantic rhythm and syntactic constructions of early tetrasyllabic *shi* poetry. As shown in [chapter 1](#), the *Book of Poetry* is

made up largely of poems composed in tetrasyllabic lines. A tetrasyllabic line almost uniformly consists of two disyllabic segments. So 2 + 2 becomes the distinctive semantic rhythm of tetrasyllabic *shi* poetry. Depending on the words chosen, this 2 + 2 rhythm enacts either a subject + predicate or a topic + comment construction:

peach tree	this	yao	yao	桃之夭夭	(táo zhī yāo yāo)
zhuo	zhuo	its	flowers	灼灼其華	(zhuó zhuó qí huá)
this	girl	going to	marry	之子于歸	(zhī zǐ yú guī)
fit	her	chamber	house	宜其室家	(yí qí shì jiā)

In this stanza from “The Peach Tree Tender” (C1.2), lines 3 and 4 each constitute a subject + predicate construction. Line 3 introduces a complete declarative statement (“This girl is going to be married”) and line 4 a truncated one, with the subject omitted (“fit for her chamber and house”). Lines 1 and 2 each introduce a topic + comment construction. In line 1, the “peach tree” marks the topic of attention, while “yaoyao,” a reduplicative (*lianmian zi*), constitutes the comment on the peach tree by the perceiver. Line 2 displays the same structure even though the comment (*zhuozhuo*) is placed before the topic (peach flowers).

Lines 1 and 2 exhibit the distinctive features of the originaive topic + comment construction in the *Book of Poetry*. It typically yokes together two disparate segments—an external object and an inward response—without any connective. It is also marked by a prodigious use of reduplicatives as the comment. While English reduplicatives are usually onomatopoeic (for example, “hush-hush” and “ticktock”) and sometimes conceptual as well (for example, “hanky-panky” and “helter-skelter”), reduplicatives in the *Book of Poetry* primarily express a perceiver’s emotional response to external phenomena by translating it into alliterative and rhyming sounds untainted by conceptualization. This emotive use of reduplicatives has had a lasting impact on Chinese poetry.

### Sao Poetry

The **Chuci** (*Lyrics of Chu*) furnishes us with the first instance of a significant remolding of the topic + comment construction. The basic rhythm of early *Chuci* works is 3 + 2. As shown in the following excerpt, the initial trisyllabic segment is made up of a monosyllabic word and a

binome and entails a minor pause (as indicated by °). Thus the semantic rhythm may be detailed as (1 + 2 or 2 + 1) + 2. The total number of 5, however, should not be confused with the actual character count of a line. A line of an early *Chuci* work contains one pause-indicating character, *xi*, placed in the middle (after the third word). This 3 + 2 rhythm gives rise, in most cases, to a topic + comment construction:

lord°	not	come	<i>xi</i>	hesitant	—	君不行兮夷猶
oh°	whom	linger	<i>xi</i>	middle	isle	蹇誰留兮中洲
lovely°	<i>yao</i>	<i>miao</i>	<i>xi</i>	well	decorated	美要眇兮宜修
quickly°	I	ride	<i>xi</i>	cassia	boat	沛吾乘兮桂舟

These opening lines of “The Lord of the Xiang River” (C2.1) are clearly topic + comment, with the trisyllabic segment as the topic and the disyllabic segment as the comment. Although line 4 seems like subject + predicate, it should also be taken as topic + comment. The long pause created by *xi* makes the “cassia boat” more an afterthought than the object of the verb “ride.” A comparison of these topic + comment constructions with those in the *Book of Poetry* reveals two important changes, which ironically seem to weaken the evocative power of the topic + comment.

The first change is the addition of an extra character to the topic. This extra character creates an imbalance between topic and comment. In all these lines, the topic expands from a simple object (as in the *Book of Poetry*) to a self-contained syntactic construction: a mini subject + predicate in lines 1 and 2 (“The lord would not come”; “Oh for whom are you lingering?”), a mini topic + comment in line 3 (“You, lovely” [*yao miao*, an assonant reduplicative]), and again a mini subject + predicate in line 4 (“Quickly I ride”). This expansion makes the trisyllabic segment a site of concentrated emotional expression in and of itself.

The second change is the insertion of the pause indicator *xi* between the topic and the comment. This pause provides a sense of closure to the topic and, in effect, reduces the ensuing comment to an afterthought. The weakening of the comment is also reflected in its shift from emotional response to pure supplemental information, as shown in line 2 (“middle isle”). As a weakened comment or simply an appendage, the disyllabic segment of a typical early *Chuci* line can often be omitted without impairing a line’s meaning. In “The Lord of the Xiang River,” for instance,

all the lines would still be perfectly coherent without the disyllabic segments. In terms of aesthetic effect, however, these disyllabic segments are indispensable because they help to create the quick and powerful rhythm of a shaman chant and dance and amplify emotional expression.

In later *Chuci* works, represented by “On Encountering Trouble” (C2.3), the pause indicator *xi* is repositioned, as shown in the following excerpt, to the end of the first line of a couplet. This may seem an insignificant move, but it actually brings about a profound change in both rhythm and syntax.

- Having from birth this inward beauty,  
10 I added to it fair outward adornment:  
I dressed in selinea and shady angelica,  
And twined autumn orchids to make a garland.  
Swiftly I sped as in fearful pursuit,  
Afraid that time would race on and leave me behind.  
15 In the morning I gathered the angelica on the mountains,  
In the evening I plucked the sedges of the islets.  
The days and months hurried on, never delaying,  
Springs and autumns sped by in endless alternation.  
I thought how the trees and flowers were fading and falling,  
20 And feared that my Fairest’s beauty would fade too.

[CCBZ, 3–47]

splendidly	I	since	have	this	inner	beauty	<i>xi</i>	紛吾既有此內美兮 ( <i>fēn wú jǐ yǒu cǐ nèi měi xi</i> )
moreover	add to	it	<i>yi</i> (to)	refine	appearance			又重之以脩能 ( <i>yòu zhòng zhī yǐ xiū néng</i> )
dress	river	selinea	<i>yu</i> (and)	shady	angelica	<i>xi</i>		扈江離與辟芷兮 ( <i>hù jiāng lí yǔ pì zhǐ xi</i> )
twine	autumn	orchids	<i>yi</i> (to)	make	garland			紉秋蘭以為佩 ( <i>riè qiū lán yǐ wéi pèi</i> )
swiftly	I	as	will	not	reach	<i>xi</i>		汨余若將不及兮 ( <i>mì yú ruò jiāng bù jí xi</i> )
fear	year	—	<i>zhi</i> (of)	not	me	give		恐年歲之不吾與 ( <i>kǒng nián suì zhī bù wú yǔ</i> )
morning	gather	mountain	<i>zhi</i> (of)	wood	orchid	<i>xi</i>		朝搴阰之木蘭兮 ( <i>zhāo qiān pí zhī mù lán xi</i> )
evening	pluck	islets	<i>zhi</i> (of)	sedges	—			夕攬洲之宿莽 ( <i>xī lǎn zhōu zhī sù mǎng</i> )
days	months	hurried	<i>qi</i>	never	delaying	<i>xi</i>		日月忽其不淹兮 ( <i>rì yuè hū qí bù yān xi</i> )
spring	and	autumn	<i>qi</i>	alternate	order			春與秋其代序 ( <i>chūn yǔ qiū qí dài xù</i> )
think	grass	trees	<i>zhi</i> (of)	fade	fall	<i>xi</i>		惟草木之零落兮 ( <i>wéi cǎo mù zhī líng luò xi</i> )
fear	fair	beauty	<i>zhi</i> (of)	late	dusk			恐美人之遲暮 ( <i>kǒng měi rén zhī chí mù</i> )

As shown in the word-for-word translation, the pause indicator *xi* has yielded the middle position to a connective—*yi* (to, in order to), *yu* (and), *zhi* (of), *qi* (a word linking subject and predicate), *yu* (in), and so on. This creates a new rhythm, 3 + 1 + 2, and makes the lines genuinely hexasyllabic. This new rhythm is slower and less powerful than that of early *Chuci* works and seems to reflect a shift from shamanistic performance to a narrative-descriptive presentation.

The substitution of syntactic connectives for *xi* brings about a dramatic change of syntax. As noted earlier, *xi* produces a long pause and effectively breaks a line into two distinct parts (a trisyllabic topic and a disyllabic comment). By contrast, these syntactic connectives combine the trisyllabic and disyllabic segments into one uninterrupted line. If a *xi*-separated line is by default a topic + comment construction, such a connective-linked line is almost invariably a subject + predicate construction. A notable exception is where an extended noun phrase takes up an entire line (line 1).

The syntactic role of the disyllabic segment is determined by the connective that precedes it. As shown in the excerpt, the connective *zhi*, roughly equivalent to “s” in English, introduces the disyllabic segment as

the object of a transitive verb (lines 15–16 and 19–20). The connective *qi* normally introduces the disyllabic segment as the main verb while making the preceding trisyllabic segment the subject (lines 17–18). The connective *yi*, equivalent to “in order to” in English, almost always introduces an auxiliary clause of purpose (lines 10 and 12). The list of connectives used in *Chuci* lines is quite short, and they tend to recur very frequently in a long poem like “On Encountering Trouble.” While these connectives each help to form a particular kind of subject + predicate, they share one feature: they produce strictly linear one-directional sentences and do not allow an inversion of the subject + predicate order. This undoubtedly contributes to the building of a forward momentum highly desirable for an extended narration or description. It is perhaps for this reason that these *sao*-style lines are heavily used not only in the *Chuci* but also in the *fu* poetry of later times.

### *Fu Poetry*

The *fu* genre features two dominant rhythms, 2 + 2 and 3 + 1 + 2, inherited from the *Book of Poetry* and *Lyrics of Chu*, respectively. The preponderance of these two rhythms in the Han *fu* corpus should not surprise us, as the rise of the *fu* genre has been widely attributed to the influence of those two ancient collections. Some *fu* works, like “*Fu* on the Imperial Park” (C3.1), by **Sima Xiangru** (179–117 B.C.E.), extensively use the 2 + 2 *Shijing* rhythm along with a secondary *Chuci* rhythm of 3 + 1 + 2. Other Han *fu* works feature a parallel use of these two rhythms. These poems seem entitled to the appellation of “four and six” given to “parallel prose” (*pianwen*), a prose characterized by alternating tetrasyllabic and hexasyllabic lines. In fact, they are often called parallel *fu* because of their likeness to parallel prose. There is nothing particularly innovative about Han *fu* writers’ employment of the 2 + 2 and 3 + 1 + 2 rhythms. A noteworthy change is the tendency to use a long succession of 2 + 2 lines to enumerate objects and things and then depict their conditions or actions. In “*Fu* on the Imperial Park,” for instance, we see again and again an exuberant catalog of splendid objects and things (lines 96–100, 202–208, and so on), followed by an equally exhaustive description of their appearance and motions (lines 101–107, 209–218, and so on).

### *Pentasyllabic Shi Poetry*

Pentasyllabic *shi* poetry ushers in a 2 + 3 rhythm seldom consciously employed before the Later Han. Once firmly established, this new rhythm



quickly gained popularity and became the core rhythm for all major *shi* subgenres developed since the Later Han. Having already given a technical analysis of this rhythm in [chapter 5](#), I shall examine here how it enabled Six Dynasties and Tang poets to remold both subject + predicate and topic + comment constructions. Let us begin with a famous couplet from “Climbing the Lakeside Tower” ([C6.7](#)), by **Xie Lingyun** (385–433):

pond banks grow• spring grass 池塘生春草 (*chí táng shēng chūn cǎo*)  
garden willows change• singing birds 園柳變鳴禽 (*yuán liǔ biàn míng qín*)

The 2 + 3 rhythm of this couplet may seem at first sight an insignificant reversal of the 3 + 2 *Chuci* rhythm. In reality, the significance of this transposition cannot be overstated. After the middle-positioned *xí* (or any other connective) is eliminated and the trisyllabic segment swaps position with the disyllabic segment, the top-heavy imbalance of the 3 + 2 *Chuci* rhythm is corrected. What arises is a balanced, dynamic rhythm of 2 + 1 + 2 or, alternatively, 2 + 2 + 1. In this new rhythm, the odd 1 is no longer confined to the trisyllabic segment (as in the *Chuci* 3 + 2 line) and, in fact, becomes the pivot for the entire line, engaging its two segments in a dynamic interplay.

The rhythm of Xie Lingyun’s couplet is 2 + 1 + 2. The initial 2 and ending 2 are noun binomes in both lines, and the odd 1 is a verb in both. Seeing this succession of noun + verb + noun, we, conditioned by our habitual manner of reading, almost automatically read the couplet as subject + predicate with two direct objects: “Pond banks *giving birth to* spring grass, / Garden willows *change into* the singing birds.” Our sense of logic, however, immediately makes us realize that the two verbs depict the poet’s imaginative perception rather than real phenomena of nature.

This leads us to see a genuine topic + comment construction underlying what we may call a pseudo subject + predicate. “Pond banks” and “spring grass,” and “garden willows” and “singing birds” are the twin topics. The verbs, “grow” and “change,” placed between them are the comments. The two comments reveal the poet’s perceptual illusion resulting from a dramatic condensation of time in his reverie-like perception. Condensing months of gradual seasonal changes (the grass’s growth and the birds’ return) into a startling moment of change, Xie Lingyun entertains the illusion of the pond banks giving birth to green grass and the garden willows changing into singing birds. As we

reexperience Xie Lingyun's imaginative transformation of physical realities, we cannot but share the poet's sense of delight and wonder at the sudden advent of spring. Moreover, this montage of disparate images—barren pond banks with green grass, (implied) leafless willow gardens with singing birds—brings forth a cosmic vision, one characterized by perpetual growth and change. Indeed, the comments “grow” and “change” are none other than the twin cardinal cosmic principles expounded in the *Book of Changes*: “To grow and grow is called the *Changes*” and “[The alternation of] one yin and one yang is called the Dao.”<sup>7</sup>

Xie Lingyun's construction of this famous couplet presages how Tang poets, especially the High Tang masters, would exploit the expressive potential of the 2 + 3 rhythm in pentasyllabic poetry. Like Xie Lingyun, they would spare no effort to utilize syntactic ambiguities to conflate a pseudo subject + predicate and a genuine topic + comment. They focus, too, on exploiting what is often called the **verse eye**—an animating and often logically impossible verb that engenders, as in Xie Lingyun's couplet, an enchanting perceptual illusion.

Tang regulated verse presents us with topic + comment constructions of varying degrees of complexity. Du Fu's poem “The Jiang and Han Rivers” (C8.2) features a relatively simple topic + comment construction in which the topic (disyllabic segment) is a noun binome depicting a broad scene and the comment (trisyllabic segment) is a mini subject + predicate depicting the poet's physical and emotional conditions. As I have already discussed the aesthetic effect of this construction in that poem in [chapter 8](#), let me consider a complex twin topic + comment construction, in which *both* the topic and the comment are mini subject + predicate constructions:

feel	time	flower•	shed	tear	感時花濺淚	(gǎn shí huā jiàn lèi)
hate	separation	bird•	startle	heart	恨別鳥驚心	(hèn bié niǎo jīng xīn)

In this famous couplet from Du Fu's “Spring Scene” (C8.1), each line contains two subjects: an implied subject (who “feels time” and “hates separation”) in the initial disyllabic segment and an explicit nonhuman subject (that “sheds tears” and “startles heart”) in the ensuing trisyllabic segment. As I have explained in [chapter 8](#), the omission of the first subject gives rise to a syntactic ambiguity that allows for four different readings of the couplet (see pp. 165–167). This couplet also invites a fifth



reading as a complex topic + comment:

Feeling time—flowers shed tears,  
Hating separation—a bird startles the heart.

This reading is contingent on a deliberately prolonged pause (as indicated by the dashes) that breaks the spatiotemporal-logical link between the disyllabic and trisyllabic segments. When so separated, the disyllabic segments (“feeling time” and “hating separation”) become the topics being contemplated by the poet; and the trisyllabic segments (“flowers shed tears” and “a bird startles the heart”) become the poet’s comments on his own emotional state. These comments may be taken as flashes of mental images in the poet’s mind that reveal his otherwise indescribable feelings. Indeed, they enable us to reexperience the montage-like leaps of his mind during his intense self-reflection.

### *Heptasyllabic Shi Poetry*

“Upper 4 and lower 3” (*shang si xia san*) is the phrase frequently used by traditional Chinese critics to characterize the rhythm of heptasyllabic poetry. In traditional Chinese writing, words are arranged vertically from top to bottom and lines from right to left on a page. So “upper 4” denotes the initial tetrasyllabic segment and “lower 3” the ensuing trisyllabic segment. Together the two segments form a 4 + 3 rhythm. To many modern critics, however, 2 + 2 + 3 is a preferable description of this rhythm because it better reveals heptasyllabic poetry’s inherent bond with, if not genesis in, pentasyllabic poetry, whose rhythm is 2 + 3. Wang Li, for example, considers a heptasyllabic line as essentially a two-character extension of a pentasyllabic line. So he classifies heptasyllabic lines into seven major types, according to the parts of speech and positioning of the two additional characters.<sup>8</sup>

In my view, the 4 + 3 and 2 + 2 + 3 rhythms are not one and the same, as commonly believed, but represent two distinct rhythms of heptasyllabic poetry. As I shall demonstrate in the following, they co-arise with different kinds of syntax and produce very different aesthetic effects.

The 2 + 2 + 3 rhythm consists of a core 2 + 3 rhythm plus an auxiliary 2. Of the first four characters, which two are to be considered auxiliary could sometimes be a rather arbitrary decision. Yet a simple rule seems to work well in most cases: the auxiliary 2 should be the two characters

that could be taken out with the least impact on a line's meaning. Applying this rule, we can easily identify the auxiliary 2 in each line of the following poem by **Li Shangyin** (813–858):

### C18.1 Sui Palace

- Purple Spring's palace halls lay locked in the twilight mist;  
 2 He wished to make the Overgrown City a home of emperors.  
 The jade seal: if it had not somehow become the Sun-horn's,  
 4 Brocade sails, then, would have reached heaven's end.  
 To this day the rotten grass is without fireflies' flash,  
 6 From antiquity lie the drooping willows, with the sunset crows.  
 Beneath the earth, if he would run into the Latter Lord of Chen,  
 8 How could it be fitting to ask about "Rear Courtyard Flowers"?  
 [QTS 16:539.6161; also translated and discussed under C9.6]

							隋宮	(suí gōng)
(purple	spring)	palace	hall	lock	mist	rosy clouds	(紫泉)宮殿鎖煙霞	(zǐ quán gōng diàn suǒ yān xiá)
(wish	take)	overgrown	city	take as	emperor	home	(欲取)蕪城作帝家	(yù qǔ wú chéng zuò dì jiā)
jade	seal	(not	due to)	belong	sun	horn	玉璽(不緣)歸日角	(yù xǐ bù yuán guī rì jiǎo)
brocade	sail	(ought	to be)	arrive at	heaven	end	錦帆(應是)到天涯	(jǐn fān yīng shì dào tiān yá)
(up to	today)	rotten	grass	not have	firefly	fire	(於今)腐草無螢火	(yú jīn fǔ cǎo wú yíng huǒ)
(since	antiquity)	drooping	willow	have	sunset	crow	(終古)垂楊有暮鴉	(zhōng gǔ chuí yáng yǒu mù yā)
earth	beneath	(if	run into)	Chen	latter	lord	地下(若逢)陳後主	(dì xià ruò féng chén hòu zhǔ)
(how could	fitting)	again	ask	rear	courtyard	flower	(豈宜)重問後庭花	(qǐ yí chóng wèn hòu tíng huā)

[Tonal pattern 1a, see p. 172]

The auxiliary 2, as shown by the parentheses, appears at the beginning or in the middle of a line, giving rise to two distinct patterns: (2) + 2 + 3 and 2 + (2) + 3. Without the auxiliary 2, this poem would be essentially a jumble of descriptive fragments relating to the Sui emperor Yang (**Yang Guang**, 569–618). With the auxiliary 2, the poet manages to construct two mutually intertwined frameworks of contrast—between past and present and between reality and imagination—within which all the fragments coalesce into a whole.

Now let us see how the auxiliary 2 brings about this magical transformation. In the first couplet, the auxiliary 2 is made up of a noun

and a modal phrase. In line 1, “Purple Spring,” a river in the Chang’an area, makes it clear that the palace is in an abandoned state (“lay locked in the twilight mist”) is the official Sui Palace in the capital city of Chang’an. In line 2, the modal phrase “wished to make” reveals the reason for the abandoned state of that palace: Emperor Yang “wished to make the Overgrown City a home of emperors.” “Overgrown City” refers to Guangling, present-day Yangzhou on the Yangtze; “home of emperors” is a reference to the resort palace built in the Overgrown City for his excursions to the Yangtze region. Thanks to the auxiliary 2, the poet turns the otherwise objective depiction of the two palaces into an indictment against Emperor Yang. His extravagance knew no end: the grand capital palace was not enough for him, and he had others built for him far away from the capital. His abandonment of the capital palace in favor of his resort palace attested to his wanton neglect of state affairs.

In the second couplet, the auxiliary 2 features a pair of conjunctions that knit two lines into a complex subject + predicate. The first conjunction, “if ... not [for certain reasons],” introduces a past subjunctive conditional clause: “The jade seal: if it had not somehow become the Sun-horn’s.” In traditional Chinese physiognomy, “sun-horn” denotes the hornlike protrusion on the forehead of someone who is or is destined to be an emperor. Here “Sun-horn” specifically refers to Li Shimin (Emperor Taizong of the Tang, 600–649), who overthrew the Sui and founded the Tang dynasty. The second conjunction, “ought to be,” helps to construct a past subjunctive result clause: “Brocade sails, then, would have reached heaven’s end.” “Brocade sails” refers to the huge pleasure boat used by Emperor Yang in his excursions to the Yangtze region. While the conditional clause tells of Emperor Yang’s dethronement by Li Shimin, the result clause reveals its cause—his inordinate pursuit of pleasure. This complex subject + predicate also invites a different reading, with Emperor Yang as the speaker. In that case, we would imagine that in the underworld (anticipating the last couplet) Emperor Yang was ruefully saying that if he had not lost his empire to Li Shimin, his pleasure boat would have reached to heaven’s end. Whether read in the voice of the poet or that of Emperor Yang, these two lines unmistakably deliver a scathing mockery of the debauchery and extreme folly of this dethroned emperor.

In the third couplet, the auxiliary 2 rounds out the subject + predicate by supplying adverbials of time. The two adverbials are intended to link past and present. In line 5, “to this day” links the present dearth of fireflies

to a tale of the past: Emperor Yang ordered that all fireflies be caught to light lanterns for his nighttime pleasure trips. Conversely, “from antiquity” in line 6 traces the present sight of old willow trees back to the time when they were planted along the Grand Canal by order of Emperor Yang. It also reminds us of the story that Emperor Yang renamed his favorite tree, willow, as “Yang willow” after his own surname. What now remains of these once-glorious trees are inauspicious crows perched in them. Thanks to the two adverbials, this couplet yields a double vision of present desolation (old trees, crows, and sunset) and bygone imperial extravagance (nighttime excursion and pleasure boats on the willow-flanked canal). By juxtaposing these two worlds, the poet amplifies his mockery of the emperor’s foolish, self-destructive pursuit of pleasure.

In the last couplet, the auxiliary 2 once again combines two lines into a complex subject + predicate. In line 7, “if he would run into” ushers in yet another subjunctive clause, “Beneath the earth, if he would run into the Latter Lord Chen,” while “how could it be fitting” turns line 8 into a rhetorical question. This subjunctive clause, like that in the second couplet, leads us into the realm of imagination. The imagined meeting between the two emperors is an ingenious play of irony. Lord Chen, notorious for his debauchery, was the last emperor of the Chen dynasty. The new companion he might meet in the underworld is none other than Emperor Yang, who defeated and overthrew his empire. Here the reader may fancy seeing Lord Chen gleefully saying to himself upon this meeting: “My conqueror now lost his empire for exactly the same sins that had led to my own downfall.” This play of irony continues in the next line: “How could it be fitting to ask about ‘Rear Courtyard Flowers’?” “Rear Courtyard Flowers,” a song composed by Lord Chen, is a well-established symbol for extravagance and debauchery. By raising this rhetorical question, the poet means to say that Emperor Yang, upon meeting Lord Chen, would nonetheless consult him on matters of corporeal gratification. This, then, shows that Emperor Yang was totally oblivious to the irony of his fate and completely beyond repentance. Even though in life he could not sail his pleasure boat to “heaven’s end,” he was obviously determined to do so in the underworld. With this poignant rhetorical question, the poet brings his ridicule of Emperor Yang to a climax.

Our reading of “Sui Palace” shows that the auxiliary 2 is anything but auxiliary as far as the entire poem is concerned. Although it is ancillary to the literal sense of an individual line, the auxiliary 2 is of pivotal

importance in the construction of complex subject + predicate sentences in the poem. Without the help of these sentences, Li Shangyin could not have moved so smoothly between past and present, between reality and fiction, and, in the process, blended narration and commentary into an enchanting vision of history.

In my view, the other heptasyllabic rhythm, 4 + 3, should be reserved solely for describing lines in which the tetrasyllabic segment is self-cohesive and detachable from the trisyllabic segment. This line configuration strikes us as an expanded version of the 3 (+ *xi*) + 2 lines of early *Chuci* works. Indeed, it, too, produces a top-heavy dynamic in both sound and sense. The combination of two self-cohesive segments necessitates a relatively longer pause in between than the one that exists between 2 + 2 and 3. Certainly this pause is not as long as that created by the pause indicator *xi* in a *Chuci* line. Yet it seems sufficient to produce a similar impact on the syntax: breaking the line into an initial main and an ensuing supplementary part. The following poem, composed almost entirely of 4 + 3 lines, displays this bipartite syntax:

## **C18.2**

### **Crossing the Sea of Loneliness**

- All the hardships I've encountered—they began with one classic;  
2 Shields and dagger-axes have grown few and far between—four  
cycles of stars.  
Rivers and mountains are shattered—bits of fluff blown in the wind;  
4 My life drifts and swirls—patches of duckweed beaten by the rain.  
Along the Bank of Fears I told of fears,  
6 On the Sea of Loneliness I sighed over loneliness.  
Whose life, ever since antiquity, is without death?  
8 Let my loyal heart shine on the bamboo tablets!

[QSS 68:3598.43025]

過零丁洋 (guò líng dīng yáng)

hardship	—	meet	with	arise	one	classic	辛苦遭逢起一經 (xīn kǔ zāo féng qǐ yì jīng)
shield	dagger-ax	few	few	four	cycle	star	干戈落落四周星 (gān gē luò luò sì zhōu xīng)
mountain	river	broken	shattered	wind	blow	bits of fluff	山河破碎風拋絮 (shān hé pò suì fēng pāo xù)
self	history	drift	swirl	rain	beat	duckweed	身世飄搖雨打萍 (shēn shì piāo yáo yǔ dǎ píng)
fear	—	bank	on	speak of	fear	—	惶恐灘頭說惶恐 (huáng kǒng tān tóu shuō huáng kǒng)
loneliness	—	ocean	on	sigh	loneliness	—	零丁洋裏嘆零丁 (líng dīng yáng lǐ tàn líng dīng)
human	life	since	antiquity	who	has no	death	人生自古誰無死 (rén shēng zì gǔ shuí wú sǐ)
leave	get	red	heart	shine	sweat	green	留取丹心照汗青 (liú qǔ dān xīn zhào hàn qīng)

[Tonal pattern IIa, see p. 172]

This poem was written by Wen Tianxiang (1236–1283), a Song loyalist who bravely fought against the Mongols and died a martyr's death. The poem begins with an unusual series of four topic + comment lines. As shown by the dashes, the two parts of lines 1–4 are not spatiotemporally or logically linked and must be understood in terms of topics and comments. Moving down the tetrasyllabic column, we see the changing topics of the poet's deepening reflection: his career path, his recent military action, the country's present condition, and his present condition. As the topics move from past to present, the poet's comments (the trisyllabic column) become more and more emotionally charged. The first comment, "they began with one classic," is largely explanatory. It tells us that his career began with his study of the Confucian classics. The other three comments enact a montage-like leap to a concrete image. In line 2, "four cycles of stars" primarily denotes the span of four years during which Wen Tianxiang ceaselessly waged battles against the Mongols despite the vanishing of military resistance across the country. It also carries a spatial connotation—the starlit sky above the deserted battlegrounds. In line 3, "bits of fluff blown in the wind" turns the topic, the country's destruction, into a heartrending image. The weighty "rivers and mountains" (a metaphor for the country) are now turned into soft, weightless "bits of fluff" irretrievably blown away. In line 4, "patches of duckweed beaten by the rain" works in the same fashion; it changes the topic, the rise and fall of the poet, into a pathetic image of a rootless, constantly battered plant.

The second half of the poem exhibits a change to subject + predicate constructions. The tetrasyllabic and trisyllabic segments of all four lines are merged to form declarative statements. Lines 5–7 are simple subject + predicate lines, but the last line is a complex twin subject + predicate.

In lines 5 and 6, the tetrasyllabic segments are extended adverbials of place, while the trisyllabic segments are the core subject (implied) + predicate. When an adverbial is extended from two (as in pentasyllabic poetry) to four words, it becomes the focus of a line. This foregrounding of adverbials works perfectly at this juncture of the poem. The “Bank of Fears,” on the Gan River in the southern province of Jiangxi, is a place Wen Tianxiang passed through in 1277 in a hasty retreat after losing a battle to the Mongols. So the poet is not speaking about the present but reminiscing about his recent telling of fear in that place named Fears. The next adverbial, however, brings the time frame to the present. The “Sea of Loneliness” is none other than the bay Wen Tianxiang was crossing when writing the poem two years later. Once again, the emotive import of a place-name amazingly coincides with what the poet was feeling in that place. Being escorted back to northern China by the Mongols as a trophy of their complete conquest of China, the poet felt the extreme pain of humiliation and loneliness. The ending couplet marks a dramatic turning in the poet’s mood. The sublimation of his sorrow into heroic defiance is achieved through an impassioned contemplation on life’s meaning. Line 7 advances the premise, “Whose life, ever since antiquity, is without death?” and line 8 presents the conclusion: “Let my loyal heart shine on the bamboo tablets [history books]!” Ever since the poet’s death, this couplet has become probably the best-known Chinese motto for heroic action and sacrifice. To this day, Wen Tianxiang is remembered and admired by millions of Chinese for this great couplet as well as for his heroic action.

My analysis of the two heptasyllabic poems reveals an inherent relationship between the two heptasyllabic rhythms and certain syntactic constructions. The 2 + 2 + 3 rhythm usually co-arises with a single but fully developed subject + predicate, often complete with adverbials of time or place. This rhythm is not particularly conducive to and, in fact, not frequently used for the construction of a topic + comment line. For instance, there is none in Li Shangyin’s “Sui Palace.” Conversely, the 4 + 3 rhythm often goes with a complex twin subject + predicate. Only when the tetrasyllabic segment is an extended adverbial or nominal phrase do we see a simple subject + predicate in 4 + 3 lines. Thanks to the long pause between its tetrasyllabic and trisyllabic segments, a 4 + 3 line also readily lends itself to the topic + comment construction. As just shown, half of Wen Tianxiang’s “Crossing the Sea of Loneliness” is made up of topic + comment lines.

## Ci Poetry

The dominance of the *shi* rhythms (2 + 3, 2 + 2 + 3, and 4 + 3) remained unchallenged until the rise of *ci* poetry during the Late Tang and the Song. Unlike the *sao*, *fu*, and *shi* genres, *ci* poetry does not exhibit an overall uniform semantic rhythm. Each of the roughly four hundred major *ci* tunes has its own fixed combination of lines (mostly irregular) and employs a unique set of semantic rhythms. This absence of uniformity enabled *ci* poets to be far more innovative than practitioners of other genres in the use of semantic rhythms. Of the many new features of *ci* rhythms, two are most noteworthy: the ingenious use of existent *shi* rhythms and the creation of radically new ones.

The most ingenious use of *shi* rhythms was the creation of a multiline syntactic construction scarcely used in earlier poetic genres. Lines 4–7 from “To the Tune ‘Crows Call at Night’” (C12.1), by **Li Yu** (937–978), are a good example of this novel construction:

- 4    Cut, it doesn't break,  
      Tidied, a mess again—  
6    [This] is separation grief.  
      [This] is altogether a different kind of flavor in the heart.

[QWDC 4.450]

cut*	not	break		剪不斷	(jiǎn bú duàn)
tidy*	still	mess		理還亂	(lǐ huán luàn)
is*	separation	grief		是離愁	(shì lí chóu)
quite	is	one kind	taste flavor in* heart [suffix]	別是一般滋味在心頭	(bié shì yì bān zī wèi zài xīn tóu)

These four lines employ *shi* rhythms: the trisyllabic 1 + 2 in the first three lines and the heptasyllabic 4 + 3, with an additional disyllabic segment, in the fourth line. Although each line is a mini subject + predicate, none functions independently. Instead, the lines work together to form an extended subject + predicate construction. The first two lines constitute the subject, while the next two are its twin predicates. This subject + predicate relationship is clearly underscored by the verb “is” (*shì*) in lines 6 and 7. Interestingly, the word *shì* in line 6 can also be glossed as the demonstrative pronoun “this,” thus instead presenting us with a multiline topic + comment construction. In this reading, the first two lines are the



topic; the third line, the comment; and the fourth line, a further amplification of the comment.

The breakup of a long sentence into multiple lines is often similar to enjambment in Western poetry. Like enjambment, a multiline subject + predicate or topic + comment construction attempts to subvert the established alignment between line and completion of a syntactic construction. Often, especially where “leading words” (*lingzi*) are employed, a line ends abruptly in the middle of a sentence in order to achieve a special effect (for instance, “Meditation on the Past at Red Cliff” [C13.3], lines 3 and 13). The two multiline constructions represent a revolutionary break from poetic tradition. All earlier poetic genres and subgenres, including the irregular-line *yuefu*, almost uniformly feature end-stopped lines. Typically, an end-stopped line is paired with another to form a couplet—a larger unit with a stronger sense of closure. A multiplication of couplets, in turn, brings an entire poem to completion. While these principles of line formation are faithfully observed in *shi*, *sao*, and *fu* poetry, they are anything but sacred in *ci* poetry. In availing themselves of typical *shi* lines (trisyllabic, tetrasyllabic, pentasyllabic, and/or heptasyllabic), *ci* poets often did what Li Yu did in “To the Tune ‘Crows Call at Night’”—breaking away from the habit of coupling and composing sentences that extend over three or more lines.

Apart from their use of existent *shi* lines, *ci* poets created two new line types: the monosyllabic and the disyllabic.<sup>9</sup> Obviously, the scarcity of monosyllabic and disyllabic lines in earlier genres has much to do with the entrenched practice of making each line a complete subject + predicate or topic + comment construction. Monosyllabic and disyllabic lines are simply too short for either. Once *ci* poets had freed themselves from this practice, it was only natural for them to make prodigious use of monosyllabic and disyllabic lines, placing them in the pivotal position of a poem.

### C18.3

#### To the Tune “Sixteen-Character Song”

Heaven—

don’t let the moon shine upon the sojourner!

Where is the loved one?

[Under] the shadow of the cassia tree, alone watching the moon goddess.

heaven	天	(tiān)
don't make round toad shine sojourner asleep	休使圓蟾照客眠	(xiū shǐ yuán chán zhào kè mián)
person where in	人何在	(rén hé zài)
cassia shadow alone moon goddess	桂影自嬋娟	(guì yǐng zì chán juān)

This short poem, by **Cai Shen** (1088–1156), exhibits a radically lopsided topic + comment construction. The monosyllabic line “Heaven” constitutes the topic, the pivotal point of the entire poem. The remainder is, in effect, a series of amplifying comments by the implied observer. First, he addresses heaven, asking it to prevent the “round toad,” a Chinese mythical metaphor for the moon, from shining on him, the lonesome sojourner. This apostrophe is followed by his brief monologue: “Where is the loved one? / Under the shadow of the cassia tree [another mythical metaphor for the moon], alone watching the moon goddess.” There seems to be a deliberate ambiguity with regard to who is (are) watching the moon goddess: the subject could be “I,” “she,” or “we each.” Calculatedly lopsided, this topic + comment construction produces a maximum effect of novelty and amplification.

A doubling or tripling of monosyllabic or disyllabic segments is often used to increase the intensity of emotional expression. Consider, for instance, these powerful opening lines of the famous poem “To the Tune ‘One Beat Followed by Another, a Long Tune’” (C13.4), by **Li Qingzhao** (1084–1151):

search	search	seek	seek	尋尋覓覓 ▲	(xún xún mì mì)		
cold	cold	lonely	lonely	冷冷清清	(lěng lěng qīng qīng)		
miserable	miserable	sad	sad	sorrowful	sorrowful	悽悽慘慘戚戚 ▲	(qī qī cǎn cǎn qī qī)

The poem begins with a doubling of reduplicatives with long vowels—*xu xu*, *mì mì* (line 1) and *leng leng*, *qīng qīng* (line 2)—immediately followed by a tripling of reduplicatives in line 3 (*qī qī*, *cǎn cǎn*, *qī qī*). This creates an unprecedentedly prolonged rhythm of 2 + 2; 2 + 2 / 2 + 2 + 2 or simply 2 + 2 + 2 + 2 + 2 + 2. This drawn-out rhythm effectively translates the poet’s unending sorrow and yearning into an intense aural experience. The tripling of reduplicatives in line 3 is particularly noteworthy. Such a tripling of reduplicatives, and, for that matter, any semantic or syntactic unit, was rarely seen in earlier poetry. A sudden, prodigious use of it in *ci*

poetry seems to have been calculated to challenge the doubling tendency prominent in all earlier poetic genres.

### Qu Poetry

The Yuan **sanqu** corpus has about 160 established tunes, of which 50 or so are frequently used. Many of these tunes display semantic rhythms similar to those of short *ci* poems (**xiaoling**). It seems no coincidence that all stand-alone *sanqu* tunes (as opposed to those in a song suite [**santao**]) are called *xiaoling* as well. Working with similar semantic rhythms, *sanqu* poets nevertheless created new syntactic constructions of their own. The following two examples show how two radically different topic + comment constructions were fashioned out of the same tune.

#### C18.4

#### To the Tune “Sky-Clear Sand” [yuediao key]: Autumn Thoughts

- Withered vines, old trees, crows at dusk,  
2 A small bridge, flowing water, people’s homes,  
An ancient road, the west wind, a lean horse.  
4 The evening sun goes down in the west.  
One heartbroken man at the end of the earth.

[QYSQ 1:242]

【越調】天淨沙 秋思 ([yuè diào] tiān jìng shā qiū sī)

withered	vine	old	tree	dusk	crow	枯藤老樹昏鴉 Δ	(kū téng lǎo shù hūn yā)
small	bridge	flowing	water	people	home	小橋流水人家 Δ	(xiǎo qiáo liú shuǐ rén jiā)
ancient	road	west	wind	lean	horse	古道西風瘦馬 ▲	(gǔ dào xī fēng shòu mǎ)
evening	sun	west	down			夕陽西下	(xī yáng xī xià)
broken	intestines	man	at	heaven	end	斷腸人在天涯 Δ	(duàn cháng rén zài tiān yá)

As shown by the word-for-word translation, this poem by **Ma Zhiyuan** (1250?–1323?) bears much formal resemblance to the excerpt of Li Qingzhao’s poem “To the Tune ‘One Beat Followed by Another, a Long Tune’” (C13.4). It also makes an extensive use of tripling. Lines 1–3 constitute a tripling of hexasyllabic lines, and each line, in turn, a tripling of binomes. Thus we have a string of ten binomes (nine in lines 1–3 plus one in line 4). This produces an even more prolonged rhythm of 2 + 2 + 2 ... than in Li Qingzhao’s poem. The aesthetic effect, however, is just the opposite. In Li Qingzhao’s poem, all the disyllabic segments are

emotionally charged reduplicatives. Their rapid succession hastens the tempo and enhances the intensity of emotional expression. In Ma Zhiyuan's poem, however, all of the ten binomes are nouns for objects or scenes. Placed in succession, they suggest slowly shifting views of a traveler on the move. First, he catches sight of "withered vines" along the ancient path. Following the vines upward, he sees an old tree and the crow perched in it. Next, a "small bridge" comes into his view, with the brook meandering and leading his gaze to the village homes afar. Finally, the village is left behind, and the ancient path appears again—a "lean horse" and traveler trudge into the sunset. All these images, static or devoid of forceful motion, suggest the slow pace of a grueling journey and the traveler's sense of weariness. The flitting appearance of a pleasant village scene serves only to set off the unending desolation and sorrow faced by the traveler. In terms of syntax, the ten binomes constitute multiple topics of observation, while the final line is the speaker's comment on all these topics. This top-heavy topic + comment strikes us as the reverse of what we saw in Cai Shen's "To the Tune 'Sixteen-Character Song.'" Whereas Cai Shen's poem begins with one topic followed by multiple lines of comments, Ma Zhiyuan's poem consists of ten topics placed in succession and only one line of comment at its end.

Out of the same tune, "Sky-Clear Sand," **Qiao Ji** (1280–1345) fashioned an even more innovative topic + comment construction, one in which the comment has imperceptibly merged with the topic:

### C18.5

#### To the Tune "Sky-Clear Sand" [*yuediao* key]: Of This Occasion

						【越調】天淨沙 即事	([yuè diào] tiān jìng shā jí shì)
oriole	oriole	swallow	swallow	spring	spring	鶯鶯燕燕春春 Δ	(yīng yīng yàn yàn chūn chūn)
flower	flower	willow	willow	lush	lush	花花柳柳真真 Δ	(huā huā liǔ liǔ zhēn zhēn)
thing	thing	breezy	breezy	graceful	graceful	事事風風韻韻 ▲	(shì shì fēng fēng yùn yùn)
delicate	delicate	tender	tender			嬌嬌嫩嫩	(jiāo jiāo nèn nèn)
slender	slender	perfect	perfect	person	person	停停當當人人 Δ	(tíng tíng dàng dàng rén rén)

[QYSQ 1:592]

Comparing "Of This Occasion" with "Autumn Thoughts," we note two prominent differences in the handling of disyllabic segments. First, Qiao Ji's poem is entirely made of disyllabic segments, while Ma Zhiyuan's

poem has two trisyllabic segments (3 + 3 beat) in the last line. The makeup of the disyllabic segments is also markedly different. Whereas the ten disyllabic segments in Ma Zhiyuan's poem are all noun binomes, all fourteen disyllabic segments in this poem are reduplicatives.

These fourteen reduplicatives are of a kind rarely used in earlier poetry but quite frequently used by Qiao Ji and some other *sanqu* poets. Originally employed as comment in the originative *Shijing* topic + comment construction, reduplicatives were continually reinvented over the millennia as a prized means of emotional expression. In Li Qingzhao's "To the Tune 'One Beat Followed by Another, a Long Tune,'" all the reduplicatives are produced from established verbal and adjectival binomes. The making of such reduplicatives betrays a process opposite to the evolution of *Shijing* reduplicatives. Many, if not all, of the *Shijing* reduplicatives can be regarded as unmediated, "preconceptual" responses to external stimuli, and only over time did some of them become conceptualized as established adjectives or adverbs. By contrast, the making of new reduplicatives by Li Qingzhao speaks to a process of "deconceptualization"—that is, taking a binome apart and turning its two characters into reduplicatives to create a succession of rhythmic and emotionally expressive sounds. For instance, *xumi* (search for) becomes *xu xu mi mi*, and *lengqing* (cold and lonely) becomes *leng leng qing qing*.

With Qiao Ji, this process of deconceptualization became even more radical. To him, seemingly no part of speech was off-limits to deconstruction and deconceptualization. In "Of This Occasion," he turns all the words—monosyllabic words ("oriole" and "person"), binomes ("delicate, tender"), adjectives ("vivid"), and nouns ("flower" and "willow")—into reduplicatives. If the radical reduplication in this poem is undone, we can perceive a series of four topic + comment constructions:

Orioles and swallows—the spring,  
Flowers and willow—vivid.  
Things—graceful,  
Delicate, tender.  
Perfect—the person

The topics are two common objects of observation in Chinese poetry: the flora and fauna of springtime and a beautiful woman. Like earlier poets,

Qiao Ji presented the two in juxtaposition for the best effect of mutual illumination. The blending of nature's luster and a beauty's radiance makes each ever more enchanting. The comments are fairly commonplace adjectives. Here Qiao Ji could have deconceptualized and turned these adjectives into reduplicatives, as Li Qingzhao did, while leaving the topics in their regular nominal form. The poem would then have assumed the form of the originaive *Shijing* topic + comment. But this is not what Qiao Ji chose to do. To achieve a dramatic novel effect, he turned every single word, whether originally the topic or the comment, into a reduplicative. As the topics, too, become emotionally charged reduplicatives, they practically merge with the comments into one. Thus each word captures not only what the poet saw but also his delighted response to it. The extraordinary syntax of this poem shows how far the topic + comment construction evolved from its originaive *Shijing* form.



In this brief chapter, I have been able to depict the evolution of Chinese poetic syntax and poetic vision in only the broadest strokes. The five major genres feature a much broader array of subject + predicate and topic + comment constructions than what has been presented here. An exhaustive investigation of the two syntactic constructions and their efficacy for embodying poetic vision must be left to a future book-length study. Nonetheless, I hope that this broad outline has provided enough to stimulate a meaningful discussion on this important topic.

Zong-qi Cai

#### NOTES

1. Zhong Rong, *Shipin jizhu* (*Collected Annotations of the "Grading of Poets"*), ed. Cao Xu (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1994), 36–39.
2. Liu Xizai, *Yi gai* (*Essentials of the Arts*) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1978), 69–71.
3. Consider, for instance, the distinction between *yuefu* or *yuefu*-style poetry (chaps. 4 and 11) and *ci* poetry (chaps. 12–14).
4. Yu-kung Kao was the first scholar to explore the possibility of analyzing Chinese poetry in terms of its use of these two syntactic constructions, in *Zhongguo meidian yu wenxue yanjiu lunji* (*Studies of Chinese Aesthetics and Literature*) (Taipei: Taiwan National University Press, 2004), especially 165–208.
5. Ernest Fenollosa, *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry*, ed. Ezra Pound (San Francisco: City Lights, 1936).
6. Yuen Ren Chao, *A Grammar of Spoken Chinese* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 69–72.
7. *Xici zhuan* (*Commentary on the Appended Phrases*), A4, A5, in *Zhouyi yinde* (*A Concordance to "Yi ching"*), Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series, supplement no.

10 (Taipei: Chinese Materials and Research Aids Service Center, 1973), 40.

8. Wang Li, *Hanyu shilü xue* (*Chinese Prosody*) (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin jiaoyu chubanshe, 1979), 234–352.

9. Although a monosyllabic or disyllabic line appears occasionally in an irregular-line *yuefu*, *sao*, or *fu* poem, it is usually just an exclamatory utterance or a conjunction that has no substantive meaning in itself (for instance, “*Fu* on the Imperial Park” [C3.1], lines 74 and 79; “Song of the East Gate” [C4.5], line 19).

## SUGGESTED READINGS

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## PHONETIC TRANSCRIPTIONS OF ENTERING-TONE CHARACTERS



This list contains the entering-tone characters used in the recent-style *shi* poems and in the end rhymes of the *ci* poems presented in this anthology. All entering-tone characters end with the unaspirated consonant *p*, *t*, or *k*. Prevalent though they were during Tang and Song times, entering tones no longer exist in modern standard Chinese, but they are preserved in many regional Chinese dialects like Cantonese and Hakka.



bǎi 白 baek<sup>1</sup>  
 bǎi 百 paek  
 běi 北 pok<sup>2</sup>  
 bì 必 pjit  
 bǐ 筆 pit  
 bì 壁 pek  
 bì 碧 pjaek  
 bié 別 bjet  
 bó 薄 bak  
 bù 不 pwot  
 chā 插 tsrheap<sup>3</sup>  
 chì 赤 tsyhek  
 chū 出 tsyhwit  
 dé 得 tok  
 dī 滴 tek  
 dí 笛 dek  
 dié 蝶 dep  
 dú 獨 duwk  
 fā 發 pjot  
 fà 髮 pjot  
 fú 幅 pjuwk  
 fù 復 bjuwk  
 fù 複 pjuwk  
 gé 閣 kak  
 gé 隔 keak  
 gé 閣 kop  
 gǔ 骨 kwot  
 guō 郭 kwak  
 guó 國 kwok  
 hé 合 hop

hè 壑 hak  
 hè 鶴 hak  
 hēi 黑 xok<sup>4</sup>  
 jiáo 嚼 dzjak  
 jiē 接 tsjep  
 jié 傑 gjet  
 jī 汲 kip  
 jí 及 gip  
 jì 寂 dzek  
 jí 急 kip  
 jǐ 戟 kjaek  
 jī 積 tsjek  
 jī 跡 tsjek  
 jiá 峽 kep  
 jiǎo 角 kaewk  
 jié 結 ket  
 jué 覺 kaewk  
 kè 客 khaek  
 là 臘 lap  
 lì 力 lik  
 lì 粒 lip  
 lì 笠 lip  
 lì 立 lip  
 luè 略 ljak  
 luò 落 lak  
 lǜ 綠 ljowk  
 miè 滅 mjiet  
 miè 滅 mjiet  
 mì 宓 mit  
 mì 覓 mek

mò 莫 mak  
 mò 墨 mok  
 mò 秣 mat  
 mù 目 mjuwk  
 mù 木 muwk  
 niè 嚙 nget  
 pì 僻 phjiek  
 pò 魄 phaek  
 pū 撲 phuwk  
 pǔ 朴 phaewk  
 qiè 妾 tshjep  
 qī 戚 tshek  
 qī 七 tshit  
 qì 泣 khip  
 quē 缺 khwet  
 què 卻 khjak  
 què 雀 tsjak  
 quē 缺 khwet  
 qǔ 曲 khjowk  
 rì 日 nyit  
 rù 入 nyip  
 ruò 若 nyak  
 sà 颯 sop  
 sè 色 srik  
 sè 瑟 srit  
 shí 十 dzyip  
 shí 拾 dzyip  
 shí 識 syik  
 shì 室 syit  
 shù 述 zywit

shuò 朔	sraewk	xiá 狎	heap	yuè 嶽	ngaewk
shuō 說	sywet	xué 學	haewk	yuè 月	ngjwot
sù 宿	sjuwk	xuě 雪	sjwet	yù 玉	ngjowk
tà 闔	that	xuè 血	xwet	zhāi 摘	treak
tiě 鐵	thet	yè 葉	yep <sup>6</sup>	zhé 折	dzyet
tuō 託	thak	yè 業	ngjaep	zhóu 軸	drjuwk
wù 物	mjut	yè 謁	'jot	zhú 竹	trjuwk
wū 屋	'uwk <sup>5</sup>	yí 一	'jit	zhù 築	trjuwk
xiē 歇	xjot	yǐ 乙	'it	zhuó 著	drjak
xí 席	zjek	yì 亦	yek	zhuó 啄	traewk
xī 息	sik	yì 憶	'ik	zú 足	tsjowk
xī 夕	zjek	yù 欲	yowk	zuó 昨	dzak
xī 昔	sjek	yuè 岳	ngaewk		

#### NOTES

This transcription is based on the Early Middle Chinese system of pronunciation, as given in the *Qieyun* 切韻 (literally, cutting rhymes), an important Chinese dictionary of 601, arranged according to rhyme, which indicates pronunciations in some detail. The transcription is philologically accurate in that it represents all the distinctions known from the *Qieyùn* and other Middle Chinese sources. Designed with nonspecialists in mind, it uses only the letters and symbols of the English keyboard. However, there were more sounds in Middle Chinese than we have letters, so some sounds are represented by two, three, or even four letters. Also, Middle Chinese had some sounds that modern English does not, and vice versa (as with any two languages). In order to represent Middle Chinese pronunciation, some arbitrary conventions are necessary. The following are the main ones (described more fully in William H. Baxter, *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology* [Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1992], 27–85).

—William H. Baxter

1. The clusters *ae* and *ea* represent single vowel sounds probably like the *a* and *e* in “bat” and “bet,” respectively.

2. The letter *o* represents a sound probably like the short *u* in “tug” (not like the usual English

o).

3. The letter *r* after a consonant indicates that it is pronounced with retroflexion—that is, with the tip of the tongue turned back to touch the hard palate. English does not use such sounds, but they are found in many other languages, including modern Mandarin (written *zh*, *ch*, and *sh* in pinyin). In the Middle Chinese transcriptions, the letter *h* after a consonant indicates that it is aspirated (that is, pronounced with an audible puff of breath after it). So a combination like *tsrh-* represents a *ch*-like consonant that is retroflex (as indicated by the *-r-*) and aspirated (as indicated by the *-h-*)—more or less like the Mandarin sound written *ch* in pinyin romanization.

4. The letter *x* at the beginning of a word represents a sound like the German *ch* in “Bach.”

5. The apostrophe at the beginning of a word represents a glottal stop, the catch in the throat that some Cockney speakers use instead of *t* in words like “bottle.” In the phonetic notation used by linguists, it is written as [ʔ]. For most purposes, it can be ignored.

6. The letter *y* at the beginning of a word represents an ordinary *y* sound, but the combinations *sy* and *zy* represent, respectively, sounds like *sh* and *zh* (the sounds between the vowels in “pressure” and “pleasure,” respectively). Similarly, *tsy* represents a *ch* sound (without aspiration; if it is aspirated, it is written *tsyh* [for example, *chi* 赤 *tsyhek*]). When a *y* sound appears after the initial consonant or at the end of the syllable, it is written as *j* (as is customary in linguistics).

## ABBREVIATIONS OF PRIMARY TEXTS



- BJYJJJ Zhu Jincheng 朱金城, ed. *Bai Juyi ji jianjiao* 白居易集箋校 (*The Works of Bai Juyi, with Notes and Collations*). 6 vols. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1988.
- CCBZ Wang Yi 王逸 and Hong Xingzu 洪興祖, eds. *Chuci buzhu* 楚辭補注 (*Lyrics of Chu, with Supplements and Annotations*). Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983.
- GGZJ Yun Zhu 惲珠, ed. *Guochao guixiu zhengshi ji* 國朝閨秀正始集 (*Correct Beginnings Collection of Women's Poetry of the Qing*). Hongxiangguan, 1831.
- GGZX Yun Zhu 惲珠 and Miaolianbao 妙蓮保, eds. *Guochao guixiu zhengshi xuji* 國朝閨秀正始續集 (*Correct Beginnings Collection of Women's Poetry of the Qing: A Sequel*). Hongxiangguan, 1836.
- HS Ban Gu 班固, comp. *Han shu* 漢書 (*History of the Han Dynasty*). Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962.
- JBSCXZ Huang Zhaohan 黃兆漢, ed. *Jiang Baishi ci xiangzhu* 姜白石詞詳注 (*The Ci Poetry of Jiang Baishi, with Detailed Annotations*). Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 1998.
- JNSGJZ Qian Zhonglian 錢仲聯, annot. *Jiannan shigao jjaozhu* 劍南詩稿校註 (*The Poetry of Lu You, with Collations and Commentaries*). 8 vols. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1985.

- LBJJZ Qu Shuiyuan 瞿蛻園 and Zhu Jincheng 朱金城, eds. *Li Bai ji jiaozhu* 李白集校注 (*The Works of Li Bai, with Collected Collations and Commentaries*). 4 vols. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1980.
- MSBC Shen Deqian 沈德潛. *Mingshi biecai* 明詩別裁 (*Discerning Selection of Ming Poetry*). Hong Kong: Shangwu, 1961.
- MSZJ *Mao Shi Zheng jian* 毛詩鄭箋 (*Zheng's Notes on the Mao Text of "The Book of Poetry"*). Sibei beiyao ed.
- QSC Tang Guizhang 唐圭璋, ed. *Quan Song ci* 全宋詞 (*Complete Ci Poetry of the Song*). 5 vols. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1965.
- QSJS Qian Zhonglian 錢仲聯, ed. *Qingshi jishi* 清詩紀事 (*Qing Poetry: Recording Events*). Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1987–1989.
- QSS *Quan Song shi* 全宋詩 (*Complete Shi Poetry of the Song*). 72 vols. Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1991–1998.
- QSTRJJ Fu Shousun 富壽蓀 and Liu Baishan 劉拜山, eds. *Qianshou Tangren jueju* 千首唐人絕句 (*One Thousand Jueju Poems by Tang Writers*). Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1985.
- QTS *Quan Tang shi* 全唐詩 (*Complete Shi Poetry of the Tang*). 25 vols. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960.
- QWDC Zhang Zhang 張璋 and Huang Yu 黃畬, eds. *Quan Tang Wudai ci* 全唐五代詞 (*Complete Ci Poetry of the Tang and Five Dynasties*). Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1986.
- QYSQ Sui Shusen 隋樹森. *Quan Yuan sanqu* 全元散曲 (*Complete Song Poems of the Yuan*). 2 vols. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1964.
- SJ Sima Qian 司馬遷, comp. *Shiji* 史記 (*Records of the*

- Grand Scribe*). 10 vols. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982.
- SS Shen Yue 沈約, comp. *Song shu* 宋書 (*History of the Liu Song Dynasty*). Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974.
- SSSJ Kong Fanli 孔凡禮, ed. *Su Shi shiji* 蘇軾詩集 (*The Poetical Works of Su Shi*). 6 vols. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982.
- TYMJJJ Gong Bin 龔斌, ed. *Tao Yuanming ji jiaojian* 陶淵明集校箋 (*The Works of Tao Yuanming [Tao Qian], with Collations and Notes*). Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1999.
- WJGSZBJ Li Bi 李壁, ed. *Wang Jingong shizhu bujian* 王荊公詩注補箋 (*The Poetry of Wang Anshi, with Commentaries and Supplementary Notes*). Supplementary notes by Li Zhiliang 李之亮. Sichuan: Bashu shushe, 2001.
- WMCCJS Yang Tiefu 楊鐵夫. *Wu Mengchuang ci jianshi* 吳夢窗詞箋釋 (*The Ci Poetry of Wu Wenying, with Notes and Explanations*). Edited by Chen Bangyan 陳邦炎 and Zhang Qihui 張奇慧. Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 1992.
- WX *Wen xuan* 文選 (*Anthology of Refined Literature*). 6 vols. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1986.
- XLYJJZ Gu Shaobo 顧紹柏, ed. *Xie Lingyun ji jiao zhu* 謝靈運集校注 (*The Works of Xie Lingyun, with Collations and Commentaries*). Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1987.
- XQHWJNBCS Lu Qinli 遼欽立, comp. *Xian Qin Han Wei Jin Nanbei chao shi* 先秦漢魏晉南北朝詩 (*Poetry of the Qin, Han, Wei, Jin, and Northern and Southern Dynasties*). 3 vols. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983.
- YHDJJJ Qian Bocheng 錢伯城, ed. *Yuan Hongdao ji jianjiao* 袁宏道集箋校 (*The Works of Yuan Hongdao, with*

- Annotations and Collations*). Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1981.
- YHJ Wang Duanshu 王端淑, comp. *Yinhong ji* 吟紅集 (*Reciting Reds Collection*). 1670. Copy in Naikaku bunkō.
- YMQJ Wang Yingzhi 王英志, ed. *Yuan Mei quanji* 袁枚全集 (*The Complete Works of Yuan Mei*). 8 vols. Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1993.
- YXLG Gan Lirou 甘立嫻. *Yongxuelou gao* 咏雪樓稿 (*Drafts from the Pavilion for Chanting About Snow*). Fengxin, Jiangxi: Banjiezhai, 1843.
- YYJHLJS Wang Shizhen 王士禛. *Yuyang jinghualu jishi* 漁洋精華錄集釋 (*The Essential Works of Yuyang, with Collected Annotations*). Annotated by Li Yufu 李毓芙. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1999.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



*How to Read Chinese Poetry: A Guided Anthology* was generously funded by the Center for East Asian and Pacific Studies, the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures, and the Research Board of the University of Illinois.

In addition to acknowledging the financial support of these institutions, I wish to express my gratitude to my colleagues, my students, and the staff at the University of Illinois. In particular, I wish to thank Professor George T. Yu, former director of the center, for his valuable guidance and support. My special thanks also go to my friends Leon Chai and Cara Ryan for their illuminating comments on some parts of the manuscript, to Jerome Packard and Chilin Shih for their advice on issues of linguistics and sound recording, to Li Tonglu, Li Liyu, and Cui Jie for producing the sound recording, and again to Cui Jie for her meticulous editorial assistance. I would like to thank Professor William H. Baxter of the University of Michigan and Professor David Branner of the University of Maryland for providing advice and assistance with the phonetic transcriptions of entering-tone characters. The project has also benefited from the valuable participation and support of Professor Dore J. Levy of Brown University, Professor John Timothy Wixted of Arizona State University, and other outside scholars at its different stages.

The contributors to this volume wish to thank three anonymous readers for their insightful comments and suggestions. We are deeply indebted to Jennifer Crewe, associate director and editorial director of Columbia University Press, for her enthusiastic support and professional guidance. We are also very grateful to Irene Pavitt for overseeing the production process and to Mike Ashby for his meticulous copyediting.

Finally, I owe the deepest debt of gratitude to my wife, Jing Liao, for encouraging me to continue the project despite our extreme difficulties in the months before the conference, and to my daughter, Serena, for



countless evenings and weekends devoted to the project instead of her.

[Chapter 2](#) includes excerpts from “On Encountering Trouble,” in *The Songs of the South: An Anthology of Ancient Chinese Poems by Qu Yuan and Other Poets*, ed. and trans. David Hawkes (New York: Penguin, 1985). [Chapters 5](#), [12](#), and [13](#) contain material from Zong-qi Cai, *The Matrix of Lyric Transformation: Poetic Modes and Self-Presentation in Early Chinese Pentasyllabic Poetry* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1996); Maija Samei, *Gendered Persona and Poetic Voice: The Abandoned Woman in Early Chinese Song Lyrics* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2004); and Xinda Lian, *The Wild and Arrogant: Expression of Self in Xin Qiji’s Song Lyrics* (New York: Lang, 1999), respectively. We are grateful to the editors and publishers for their permission to reprint from those works.

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## GLOSSARY-INDEX



*The index does not contain thematic entries, as they are already provided in the thematic table of contents beginning on page xi.*

A Jiao 阿嬌 (wife of Emperor Wu of the Han)

*Among the Flowers Collection*. See *Huajian ji*

An Lushan 安祿山 (rebel general [703–757])

An Lushan Rebellion (755–763)

*Analects*. See *Lunyu*

*Annotated Edition of “The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons.”* See *Wenxin diaolong zhu*

*Anthology of Refined Literature*. See *Wen xuan*

ao lǚ 拗律 (skewed regulated verse)

Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846); ancient-style poems by

Bai Pu 白樸 (1226–after 1306), song poems by

Ban Gu 班固 (32–92)

Ban Jieyu 班婕妤 (Western Han dynasty)

Bao Yun 寶雲 (376?–449)

Bao Zhao 鮑照 (414–466)

“Bei zheng” 北征 (Northern Expedition; Du Fu)

“Beifen shi” 悲憤詩 (Poem of Lament and Indignation; attributed Cai Yan)

*Beishi* 北史 (*History of the Northern Dynasties*; Li Yanshou)

bi 比 (comparison)

Bian He 卞和 (ca. sixth century B.C.E.)

“Biao you mei” 標有梅 (Falling Plums [Mao no. 20])

bieji 別集 (poetry or prose collection)

“Bingche xing” 兵車行 (Ballad of Army Carts; Du Fu)

*Biographies of Various Ladies*. See *Lienü zhuan*

bi-xing 比興 (compare and evoke)

*Book of Changes*. See *Yijing*

*Book of Plum Trees*. See *Meipu*

*Book of Poetry, The.* See *Shijing*  
*Book of the Way and Its Power.* See *Dao de jing*  
*Bowu zhi* 博物志 (*A Comprehensive Account of Things*; Zhang Hua)  
*bu* 布 (display)  
*buyi* 布衣 (man in linen [ordinary] clothes)

Cai Shen 蔡伸 (1088–1156), short song poem by  
Cai Yan 蔡琰 (176?–early third century)  
Cai Yong 蔡邕 (132–192)  
Canliao 參寥 (1043–ca. 1116)  
Cao Cao 曹操 (155–220)  
“Cao chong” 草蟲 (Insects in the Grass [Mao no. 14])  
Cao Pi 曹丕 (187–226)  
Cao Zhi 曹植 (192–232)  
*chang duan ju* 長短句 (long and short lines)  
*changdiao ci* 長調詞 (long song lyric)  
Chen Ling Gong 陳靈公 (Duke Ling of Chen [r. 613–599 B.C.E.])  
Chen Ping 陳平 (d. 178 B.C.E.)  
Chen Xun 陳洵 (1870–1942)  
Chen Yang 陳陽 (twelfth century)  
Chen Zi'ang 陳子昂 (661–702), ancient-style poems by  
Chen Zilong 陳子龍 (1608–1647)  
*cheng* 承 (to continue; to elaborate)  
*chenzi* 襯字 (extrametrical syllables)  
Chu Guangxi 儲光義 (fl. 726)  
Chu Huai Wang 楚懷王 (King Huai [d. 296 B.C.E.])  
“Chu ju” 出車 (The Carts Come Out [Mao no. 168])  
*chuanqi* 傳奇 (Tang short stories)  
*Chuci* 楚辭 (*Lyrics of Chu*); and heptasyllabic *shi* poetry; rhythm and syntax of  
*Chuci buzhu* 楚辭補注 (*Further Annotated Edition of the “Chuci”*; Wang Yi and Hong Xingzu)  
*Chuci xuan* 楚辭選 (*Selections from the “Chuci”*; Ma Maoyuan)  
*Chuci zhangju* 楚辭章句 (*Commentary Edition of Chuci*; Wang Yi)  
*ci* 詞 (song lyric); compared with song poem; long; rhythm and syntax of; short  
“Ci lun” 詞論 (A Critique of the Song Lyric; Li Qingzhao)  
*ci yan qing* 詞言情 (*ci* gives voice to emotion)  
*Classic of History.* See *Shangshu*  
*Collected Annotations of the “Grading of Poets.”* See *Shipin jizhu*  
*Collected Commentaries of “Lisao.”* See *Lisao zuanyi*  
*Collected Commentaries on “Liezi.”* See *Liezi jishi*  
*Collected Works of Tao Yuanming.* See *Tao Yuanming ji*

*Collection of Musical Pieces.* See *Yue zhang ji*  
*Collection of Yuefu Poetry.* See *Yuefu shiji*  
*Commentary Edition of Chuci.* See *Chuci zhangju*  
*Commentary on the Appended Phrases.* See *Xici zhuan*  
*Complementary Annotations to the “History of the Han Dynasty.”* See *Han shu buzhu*  
*Complete Shi Poetry of the Ming.* See *Quan Ming shi*  
*Complete Shi Poetry of the Song.* See *Quan Song shi*  
*Complete Shi Poetry of the Tang.* See *Quan Tang shi*  
*Comprehensive Account of Things, A.* See *Bowu zhi*  
*Concordance to “Yi ching,” A.* See *Zhouyi yinde*  
“Cong jun xing” 從軍行 (Song of Serving in the Army)  
“Critique of the Song Lyric, A.” See “Ci lun”

“Da qu” 大曲 (Grand Songs [poetry classification])  
“Da ya” 大雅 (Greater Elegantiae)  
“Dafeng ge” 大風歌 (Song of the Great Wind; Han Gaozu)  
*dafu* 大賦 (large *fu*)  
Dai Shulun 戴叔倫 (732–789)  
*danbo* 淡泊 (placid and plain)  
*Dao de jing* 道德經 (*Book of the Way and Its Power*)  
“Deng lou fu” 登樓賦 (*Fu* on Climbing the Tower; Wang Can)  
“Dengtuzi haose fu” 登徒子好色賦 (*Fu* on Master Dengtu, the Lecher)  
Di 狄 (Northern Di [minority tribe])  
“Di du” 狄都 (The Russet Pear [Mao no. 119])  
*diantie chengjin* 點鐵成金 (touching iron and transforming it into gold)  
*diao* 調 (musical key)  
*didao* 地道 (way of earth)  
*diezi* 疊字 (reduplicative binome)  
Ding Fubao 丁福保 (1874–1952)  
“Dong shan” 東山 (East Mountain [Mao no. 156])  
*Draft from the Pavilion for Chanting About Snow.* See *Yongxuelou gao*  
*Drunken Words in the Garden of Art.* See *Yiyuan zhiyan*  
Du Fu 杜甫 (712–770); heptasyllabic quatrains by; heptasyllabic regulated verse by; influence of, in Ming–Qing poetry; pentasyllabic regulated verse by  
“Du jiangyun sanfan” 渡江雲三犯 (Three Shifts of the Mode of “River-Crossing Clouds”)  
Du Mu 杜牧 (803–852), heptasyllabic quatrains by  
Duan Chengshi 段成式 (d. 863)  
“Duan ge xing” 短歌行 (Short Song; Cao Cao)  
*duanju* 斷句 (broken lines)  
“Duanxiao nao ge” 短簫簫歌 (Songs for Short Panpipe and Nao Bell)

*duiju* 對句 (parallel couplet)

E Huang 娥皇 (legendary wife of Shun and daughter of Yao)

*Eight Sketches of the Literary World*. See *Saotan baliie*

*Essentials of the Arts*. See *Yi gai*

Fan Chengda 范成大 (1126–1193); heptasyllabic quatrains by

Fan Kuai 樊噲 (d. 189 B.C.E.)

Fan Tai 范泰 (355–428)

Fan Wenlan 范文瀾 (1893–1969)

*feng* 風 (airs)

“Feng ru song” 風入松 (The Wind Comes Through the Pines)

Feng Yansi 馮延巳 (903–960), short song poem by

Fenollosa, Ernest (1853–1908)

*Fictions from Five Dynasties*. See *Wuchao xiaoshuo*

Former Seven Masters. See Qian Qi Zi

*fu* 敷 (display)

*fu* 賦 (genre; rhapsody)

*fu* 賦 (style; exposition)

“*Fu* in Response to Zhen’s Epiphany.” See “Gan Zhen fu”

“*Fu* on Climbing the Tower.” See “Deng lou fu”

“*Fu* on Master Dengtu, the Lecher.” See “Dengtuzi haose fu”

“*Fu* on the Luo River Goddess.” See “Luo shen fu”

“*Fu* on the Ruined City.” See “Wu cheng fu”

Fu Yi 傅毅 (d. ca. 90)

*fugu* 復古 (return to the ancients)

Fuxi 伏羲 (demigod)

“Fuyun fu” 浮雲賦 (A Poetic Exposition on the Floating Clouds; Lu Ji)

*Further Annotated Edition of the “Chuci.”* See *Chuci buzhu*

Gan Lirou 甘立嫫 (1743–1819): ancient-style poem by; heptasyllabic quatrain by; heptasyllabic regulated verse by; pentasyllabic quatrain by; pentasyllabic regulated verse by

“Gan Zhen fu” 感甄賦 (*Fu* in Response to Zhen’s Epiphany; Cao Zhi)

Gao Bing 高棟 (1350–1423)

Gao Buying 高步瀛 (1875–1940)

Gaoxian 高閑 (fl. ninth century)

Gaozong (宋) 高宗 (r. 1127–1163)

“Ge lei” 葛藟 (Kudzu Vine and Bean Creeper [Mao no. 71])

Genghis Khan 成吉思汗 (ca. 1167–1227)



Gong'an *pai* 公安派 (Gong'an school)  
*gongti shi* 宮體詩 (palace-style poetry)  
*gu jiao hengchui qu* 鼓角橫吹曲 (songs accompanied by drum, horn, and transverse flute)  
 Guan Hanqing 關漢卿 (ca. 1220–ca. 1307); song poem by  
 Guan Yunshi 貫雲石 (1286–1324), song poem by  
 “Guchui qu ci” 鼓吹曲辭 (Lyrics for Drum and Pipe Songs)  
*gufu* 古賦 (ancient-style *fu*)  
 Guifeng Zongmi 圭峰宗密 (780–841)  
*gujue* 古絕 (ancient *jueju*)  
*guo feng* 國風 (airs of the states)  
 Guo Maoqian 郭茂倩 (twelfth century)  
 Guo Pu 郭璞 (276–324)  
 Guo Shaoyu 郭紹虞 (1893–1984)  
 Guo Ziyi 郭子儀 (697–781)  
*gushi* 古詩. See *guti shi*  
 “Gushi shijiushou” 古詩十九首 (Nineteen Old Poems): lyrical mode of, compared with *yuefu*'s  
 narrative; structure of; texture of; theme of  
*guti shi* 古體詩 (*gushi* 古詩) (ancient-style poetry)

Han Aidi 漢哀帝 (Emperor Ai [r. 6–1 B.C.E.])  
*Han Feizi* 韓非子 (*The Work of Master Han Fei*)  
 Han Gaozu 漢高祖 (Liu Bang 劉邦; Emperor Gaozu of the Han [r. 206–194 B.C.E.])  
 Han Shou 韓壽 (Jin dynasty)  
*Han shu* 漢書 (*History of the Han Dynasty*; Ban Gu)  
*Han shu buzhu* 漢書補注 (*Complementary Annotations to the “History of the Han Dynasty”*; Wang  
 Xianqian)  
 Han Tuozhou 韓侂胄 (1151–1207)  
 Han Wudi 漢武帝 (Emperor Wu of the Han [r. 140–87 B.C.E.])  
 Han Yu 韓愈 (788–824)  
 Han Yuandi 漢元帝 (r. 48–33 B.C.E.)  
 Han Yuefu 漢樂府. See *Yuefu*  
 Han *yuefu* 漢樂府. See *yuefu*  
*haofang* 豪放 (heroic abandon)  
*he* 合 (to conclude; to enclose)  
 He Xun 何遜 (d. 518)  
 He Zhizhang 賀知章 (659–744)  
*History of the Han Dynasty*. See *Han shu*  
*History of the Liu Song Dynasty*. See *Song shu*  
*History of the Northern Dynasties*. See *Beishi*  
*History of the Southern Dynasties*. See *Nanshi*

*History of the Sui Dynasty*. See *Sui shu*  
Hong Xingzu 洪興祖 (1090–1155)  
“Hong yan” 鴻鴈 (Wild Geese [Mao no. 181])  
Hou Jing 侯景 (d. 552)  
Hu Yinglin 胡應麟 (1551–1602)  
Hu Zhiyu 胡祇通 (1227–1293)  
*huaigu* 懷古 (meditation on the past)  
Huainan Wang 淮南王 (Liu An 劉安; prince of Huainan [179–122 B.C.E.])  
*Huainanzi* 淮南子 (*The Work of Huainanzi*)  
*Huajian ji* 花間集 (*Among the Flowers Collection*); tradition of  
*huan tou* 換頭 (change in meter, rhyme, setting, or mood in *ci* poetry)  
Huang Chao Rebellion 黃巢 (875–884)  
Hui Shi 惠施 (fl. 334–322 B.C.E.)  
Huiyuan 惠遠 (334–416)  
Huizong (宋) 徽宗 (Emperor Hui of the Song [r. 1100–1125])  
“Hun yi” 婚義 (Meaning of Marriage [chapter in *Li ji*])

incremental repetition

*ji* 跡 (trace)  
*Ji jiu pian* 急就篇 (*Primer for Quickly Learning Chinese Characters*; Shi You)  
Jiang Kui 姜夔 (ca. 1155–1221), long song poem on objects by  
Jiang Yan 江淹 (444–505)  
“Jiangdu chun” 絳都春 (Spring in the Crimson City; Wu Wenying)  
*Jiangnan Wu sheng* 江南吳聲 (Wu songs of the Jiangnan region)  
Jiangsu 江蘇 (province in eastern China)  
“Jiaosi ge” 郊祀歌 (Songs for the Suburban Sacrifices)  
“Jiaren” 佳人 (Beautiful Lady; Du Fu)  
*jie* 解 (stanza)  
*jiedui* 借對 (borrowed parallelism)  
“Jiming” 雞鳴 (Cocks Crow)  
Jin Changxu 金昌緒 (fl. 713–742), pentasyllabic quatrain by  
“Jin lü yi” 金縷衣 (The Garment Embroidered with Gold Thread)  
*jing* 精 (essence)  
*jing* 景 (natural scene)  
*jing* 境 (scene)  
*Jing Chu xisheng* 荊楚西聲 (western songs of Jing and Chu)  
*jing wai zhi jing* 景外之景 (scene beyond scenes)  
*Jinglü yixiang* 經律異相 (*Differentiated Manifestations of Sutras and Laws*)

*Jingzhiju shihua* 靜志居詩話 (*Remarks on Poetry from the Dwelling of Quiet Intent*; Zhu Yizun)

*jinshi* 進士 (scholar who passed the highest imperial examination)

*jinti shi* 近體詩 (recent-style poetry)

“Jiuge” 九歌 (Nine Songs)

*ju jue yi bujue* 句絕意不絕 (lines that end but meaning that does not end)

*ju li* 巨麗 (beauty of the large)

*jueju* 絕句 (cut-off lines or quatrain)

*jufa* 句法 (rules of sentences)

*junzi* 君子 (lord)

Jurchen 女真

*juyan* 句眼 (verse eye). See *shiyang*

Khublai Khan 忽必烈 (d. 1294)

*kua shi* 夸飾 (exaggerated ornamentation)

*li* 理 (literally, principle; way of life)

Li Bai 李白 (701–762); ancient-style poems by; pentasyllabic quatrains by; pentasyllabic regulated verse by

Li He 李賀 (791–817), ancient-style poem by

*Li ji* 禮記 (*Record of Rituals*)

Li Mengyang 李夢陽 (1475–1531), heptasyllabic regulated verse by

Li Qi 李奇 (commentator on the *Han shu*)

Li Qingzhao 李清照 (1084–1151); long song poem by

Li Shangyin 李商隱 (813–858); heptasyllabic quatrain by; heptasyllabic regulated verse by

Li Shimin 李世民 (Emperor Taizong of the Tang 唐太宗 [600–649])

Li Yannian 李延年 (d. 87 B.C.E.)

Li Yanshou 李延壽 (seventh century)

Li Yu 李煜 (937–978); short song poems by

Li Yu 李漁 (1611–1680), ancient-style poem by

Li Yuan 李淵 (Emperor Gaozu of the Tang 唐高祖 [r. 618–626])

Liang 梁

Liang Wudi 梁武帝 (Emperor Wu of the Liang [r. 502–549])

*lianju* 聯句 (linked verse)

*lianmian zi* 連綿字 (reduplicative binome)

*lian zhu* 聯珠 (linking pearls)

*Lidai shihua xubian* 歷代詩話續編 (*Poetry Talks of Successive Dynasties: A Sequel*)

*Lienü zhuan* 列女傳 (*Biographies of Various Ladies*; Qiu Hu)

*Liezi* 列子

*Liezi jishi* 列子集釋 (*Collected Commentaries on “Liezi”*)

Lin Bu 林逋 (Lin Hejing 林和靖 [967–1028]); heptasyllabic regulated verse by  
*lingzi* 領字 (leading words)  
*Lisao zuanyi* 離騷纂義 (*Collected Commentaries of “Lisao”*; You Guoen)  
*Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons, The*. See *Wenxin diaolong*  
*“Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons, The,” Annotated and Explicated*. See *Wenxin diaolong*  
*zhu shi*  
 Liu An 劉安 (prince of Huainan [179–122 B.C.E.])  
 Liu Chen 劉晨 (legendary character, said to have encountered fairy maidens on Mount Tiantai  
 and fallen in love with them in 72 C.E.)  
 Liu Wu 劉武 (prince of Liang [d. 144 B.C.E.])  
 Liu Xie 劉勰 (ca. 465–ca. 522)  
 Liu Xizai 劉熙載 (1813–1881)  
 Liu Yong 柳永 (987–1053); long song poem by  
 Liu Zhen 劉楨 (d. 598)  
*liushui dui* 流水對 (running-water parallelism)  
 Lu Ji 陸機 (261–303)  
 Lu Qinli 遯钦立 (1911–1973)  
 “Lu xiao” 蓼蕭 (Tall Is the Southernwood [Mao no. 173])  
 Lu You 陸游 (1125–1209), heptasyllabic quatrain by; heptasyllabic regulated verse by  
*luan* 亂 (envoi; coda)  
*lüfu* 律賦 (regulated *fu*)  
*Lunyu* 論語 (*Analects*; Confucius)  
 Luo Genze 羅根澤 (1900–1960)  
 “Luo shen fu” 洛神賦 (*Fu* on the Luo River Goddess; Cao Zhi)  
 Luoфу 羅敷 (prominent figure in Han *yuefu*)  
*lǜshi* 律詩 (regulated verse); heptasyllabic; pentasyllabic; as quatrain  
*Lyrics of Chu*. See *Chuci*

Ma Jianzhong 馬建忠 (1845–1900)  
 Ma Maoyuan 馬茂元 (1918–1989)  
*Ma shi wen tong* 馬氏文通 (*Mr. Ma’s Grammar*; Ma Jianzhong)  
 Ma Zhiyuan 馬致遠 (1250?–1323?), song poems by  
*manci* 慢詞 (long song lyric)  
 Mei Gao 枚皋 (fl. ca. 140 B.C.E.)  
 Mei Sheng 枚乘 (d. ca. 140 B.C.E.)  
 Mei Yaochen 梅堯臣 (1002–1069), ancient-style poems by  
 “Meipi xing” 漢陂行 (Song of Lake Meipi)  
*Meipu* 梅譜 (*Book of Plum Trees*; Fan Chengda)  
 Meng Kang 孟康 (ca. 180–260)

Mengzi 孟子 (ca. 372–ca. 289 B.C.E.)

Miluo Jiang 汨羅江 (Miluo River)

*Miscellanea from Youyang*. See *Youyang zazhu*

*Miscellaneous Notes on the Western Capital*. See *Xijing zaji*

“Monograph on Music.” See “Yueshu”

*Mr. Ma’s Grammar*. See *Ma shi wen tong*

*Mu zhai Records of Learning, The*. See *Mu zhai you xue ji*

*Mu zhai you xue ji* 牧齋有學集 (*The Mu zhai Records of Learning*; Qian Qianyi)

“[Nangonglü] Gewei” 南呂宮 隔尾 (To the Tune “Gewei” [*nanlü* key])

“[Nangonglü] Liangzhou” 南呂宮 梁州 (To the Tune “Liangzhou” [*nanlü* key])

*Nanshi* 南史 (*History of the Southern Dynasties*)

*New Songs of the Jade Terrace*. See *Yutai xinyong*

Nong Yu 弄玉 (legendary princess who rode to heaven on a phoenix)

Northern Di. See Di

Nü Ying 女英 (legendary wife of Shun)

Ögödei Khan (d. 1241)

Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072), short song poem by

*pai ta zhi ru* 排闥直入 (burst open the door and went straight in)

*pailü* 排律 (extended regulated verse)

Pan Yue 潘岳 (247–300)

*pengpai* 澎湃 (surging and swelling)

*pianfu* 駢賦 (parallel-style *fu*)

*pianwen* 駢文 (parallel prose)

*pingdan* 平淡 (placid and plain)

*Pleasures of Tang Poetry*. See *Tang shi kuai*

“Poetic Exposition on the Floating Clouds, A.” See “Fuyun fu”

poetic series

*Poetry Talks of Successive Dynasties: A Sequel*. See *Lidai shihua xubian*

Pound, Ezra (1885–1972)

*Primer for Quickly Learning Chinese Characters*. See *Ji jiu pian*

*pu* (*puchen*) 鋪 (鋪陳) (to display)

*qi* 氣 (breath)

*qi* 其 (connective)

*qi* 起 (to begin; to arise)

“Qi ai” 七哀 (Seven Sorrows; Wang Can)

Qi shi 七始 (Seven Beginnings)  
 Qian Qi Zi 前七子 (one of the Former Seven Masters [1475–1531])  
 Qian Qianyi 錢謙益 (1582–1664)  
 Qiao Ji 喬吉 (1280–1345); song poems by  
*qiaogou xingsi* 巧構形似 (artful structure and descriptive similitude)  
*qijue* 七絕. See *qiyan jueju*  
*qilü* 七律. See *qiyan lǜshi*  
 “Qin fu yin” 秦婦吟 (The Lament of the Lady of Qin; Wei Zhuang)  
 Qin Shi Huang 秦始皇 (r. 221–215 B.C.E.)  
*qing* 情 (emotion)  
*qing jing jiao rong* 情景交融 (fusion of feeling and scene)  
 Qingxiang Wang 頃襄王 (King Qingxiang [r. 298–263 B.C.E.])  
 Qinzong (宋) 欽宗 (Emperor Qinzong of the Song [r. 1125–1126])  
*qiwen* 奇文 (extraordinary writing)  
*qiyan* 齊言 (equal-character line)  
*qiyan jueju* 七言絕句 (*qijue* 七絕) (heptasyllabic quatrain)  
*qiyan lǜshi* 七言律詩 (*qilü* 七律) (heptasyllabic regulated verse)  
*qiyan shi* 齊言詩 (poetry of equal-character lines)  
*qu* 趨 (finale passage)  
*qu* 曲 (song poem)  
 Qu Yuan 屈原 (340?–278 B.C.E.); “The Lady of the Xiang River” (attributed); “The Lord of the Xiang River” (attributed); “On Encountering Trouble,”  
*Quan Ming shi* 全明詩 (*Complete Shi Poetry of the Ming*)  
*Quan Song shi* 全宋詩 (*Complete Shi Poetry of the Song*)  
*Quan Tang shi* 全唐詩 (*Complete Shi Poetry of the Tang*)  
  
*Record of Rituals*. See *Li ji*  
*Records of the Grand Scribe*. See *Shiji*  
*Remarks on Lyrics in the Human World*. See *Renjian cihua*  
*Remarks on Poetry from the Dwelling of Quiet Intent*. See *Jingzhiju shihua*  
*Renjian cihua* 人間詞話 (*Remarks on Lyrics in the Human World*; Wang Guowei)  
 Rong-Di 戎狄 (Rong and Di barbarians)  
 “Ru Pengli hu ko” 入彭蠡湖口 (Entering Pengli Lake; Xie Lingyun)  
 Ruan Ji 阮籍 (210–263)  
 Ruan Zhao 阮昭 (legendary character, said to have encountered fairy maidens on Mount Tiantai and fallen in love with them in 72 C.E.)  
 “Ruihe xian” 瑞鶴仙 (The Immortal of the Auspicious Crane)  
*rusheng* 入聲 (entering tone)

“San bie” 三別 (Three Separations; Du Fu)  
 “San li” 三吏 (Three Officers; Du Fu)  
*sanqu* 散曲 (song poems)  
 “Sanshu mei” 三姝媚 (Three Beautiful Women)  
*santao* 散套 (song suite)  
*sao* 騷 (poetic genre)  
*Saotan balüe* 騷壇八律 (*Eight Sketches of the Literary World*; Wang Kaisu)  
*Selections from the “Chuci.”* See *Chuci xuan*  
*Sequel to the Poetry Talks of the Tang, A.* See *Xu Tang shihua*  
 shamanism  
*shan ge* 山歌 (mountain songs)  
*shang si xia san* 上四下三 (upper 4 and lower 3, a rhythm of heptasyllabic *shi* poetry)  
 Shanglin Yuan 上林苑 (Shanglin Park)  
*Shangshu* 尚書 (*Classic of History*)  
 “Shao nan” 召南 (*Nan-Type Songs from the States Set Up by the Duke of Shao* [section of the *Shijing*])  
 Shaoxing 紹興 (present-day city)  
*shen* 神 (spirit)  
 Shen Deqian 沈德潛 (1673–1769)  
 Shen Yue 沈約 (441–513)  
*shenqi* 神氣 (inspired air)  
*shenyun* 神韻 (spirit and resonance)  
*shi* 詩 (poetic genre)  
*Shi ge* 詩格 (*Rules of Poetry*; Wang Changling)  
*shi yan zhi* 詩言志 (poetry expresses intent)  
 Shi You 史游 (fl. 48–33 B.C.E.)  
*shihua* 詩話 (remarks on poetry)  
*Shiji* 史記 (*Records of the Grand Scribe*; Sima Qian)  
*Shijing* 詩經 (*The Book of Poetry*)  
*feng* (airs) in: Mao no. 2; Mao no. 6; Mao no. 10; Mao no. 13; Mao no. 15; Mao no. 21; Mao no. 22; Mao no. 42; Mao no. 76; Mao no. 144  
*ya* (odes) in: Mao no. 228; Mao no. 237; Mao no. 278  
*Shipin jizhu* 詩品集注 (*Collected Annotations of the “Grading of Poets”*; Zhong Rong)  
*shisheng* 詩聖 (poet-sage)  
*shixian* 詩仙 (poet-immortal)  
*shiyang* 詩眼 (*juyan* 句眼) (verse eye)  
*shizhong you hua* 詩中有畫 (in his poems, there are paintings [said of Wang Wei])  
*shizi* 實字 (content words)  
*shou* 首 (head)  
 Shouyang 壽陽 (daughter of Song Wudi)

Shun 舜 (Chonghua 重華; sage-king)  
Shusun Tong 叔孫通 (fl. 205–188 B.C.E.)  
Sima Qian 司馬遷 (145–86? B.C.E.)  
Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 (179–117 B.C.E.); “*Fu* on the Imperial Park,”  
*song* 頌 (laude; hymn)  
*Song shu* 宋書 (*History of the Liu Song Dynasty*; Shen Yue)  
Song Wudi 宋武帝 (Emperor Wu of the Liu Song [r. 420–423])  
Song Yu 宋玉 (fl. third century B.C.E.)  
Su Shi 蘇軾 (Su Zizhan 蘇子瞻 or Su Dongpo 蘇東坡 [1037–1101]); ancient-style poems by; long  
song poem by  
*Sui shu* 隋書 (*History of the Sui Dynasty*; Wei Zheng)  
“Suochuang han” 鎖窗寒 (The Carved Lattice Window Is Cold)  
Suzhou 蘇州

*taimei* 苔梅 (moss plum)  
*taiyuan* 泰元 (Grand Unity)  
*Tang shi kuai* 唐詩快 (*Pleasures of Tang Poetry*; Huang Zhouxing)  
Tangshan Furen 唐山夫人 (Lady Tangshan [ca. 206 B.C.E.])  
Tao Qian 陶潛 (Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 [365?–427]); pentasyllabic *shi* poems by  
“*Tao Yuanming ji xu*” 陶淵明集序 (Preface to *The Collected Works of Tao Yuanming*; Xiao Tong)  
“Ti Yuanming ‘Yinjiu shi’ hou” 題淵明《飲酒詩》後 (On Yuanming’s “Poems on Drinking Wine”; Su  
Shi)  
*tian ci* 填詞 (filling in the words)  
“Tian wen” 天問 (Questions for Heaven; Qu Yuan)  
*tiandao* 天道 (way of heaven)  
Tiantai 天臺 (famous mountain)  
Tiantai school 天臺宗  
“Treatise on Literature Divided by Genre.” See “Wenzhang liubie lun”

Wang Anshi 王安石 (Jinggong 荊公 [1021–1086]), heptasyllabic quatrains by  
Wang Can 王粲 (177–217)  
Wang Changling 王昌齡 (698–ca. 756); heptasyllabic quatrains by  
Wang Duanshu 王端淑 (1621–ca. 1706), ancient-style poem by  
Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877–1927)  
Wang Heqing 王和卿 (fl. 1246), song poem by  
Wang Jian 王建 (ca. 767–830)  
Wang Kaisu 王楷蘇 (Qing dynasty)  
Wang Li 王力 (1900–1986)  
Wang Rong 王融 (468–494), pentasyllabic quatrain by



*wang shi* 王室 (royal chamber)  
 Wang Shizhen 王世貞 (1526–1590)  
 Wang Shizhen 王士禎 (1634–1711), heptasyllabic quatrain by  
 Wang Siren 王思任 (1575–1646)  
 Wang Wei 王維 (701?–761); pentasyllabic quatrains by; pentasyllabic regulated verse by  
 Wang Xianqian 王先謙 (1842–1918)  
 Wang Yao 王瑤 (1914–1989)  
 Wang Yi 王逸 (fl. 114–119)  
 Wang Zhaojun 王昭君 (concubine of Han Yuandi)  
 Wang Zhihuan 王之渙 (688–742), pentasyllabic quatrain by  
*wanyue* 婉約 (delicate and restrained)  
*wei* 尾 (tail)  
 Wei Zheng 魏徵 (580–643)  
 Wei Zhuang 韋莊 (ca. 836–910); short song poem by  
*weiwai zhi wei* 味外之味 (flavor beyond flavor)  
 Wen Tianxiang 文天祥 (1236–1283), heptasyllabic regulated verse by  
 Wen Tingyun 溫庭筠 (813?–870), short song poem by  
 Wen Wang (周) 文王 (King Wen of the Zhou)  
*Wen xuan* 文選 (*Anthology of Refined Literature*; Xiao Tong)  
 Wen Yiduo 聞一多 (1899–1946)  
 Wenhui (taizi) 文惠太子 (Crown Prince Wenhui [458–493])  
*wenren hua* 文人化 (literatified)  
*Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍 (*The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*; Liu Xie)  
*Wenxin diaolong zhu* 文心雕龍注 (*Annotated Edition of “The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons”*; Fan Wenlan)  
*Wenxin diaolong zhu shi* 文心雕龍註釋 (*“The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons,” Annotated and Explicated*; Liu Xie)  
 “Wenzhang liubie lun” 文章流別論 (Treatise on Literature Divided by Genre; Zhi Yu)  
 western Songs of Jing and Chu. See *Jing Chu xisheng*  
*wo* 我 (self)  
*Work of Huainanzi, The*. See *Huainanzi*  
*wu* 物 (object)  
*wu* 巫 (shaman)  
 “Wu cheng fu” 蕪城賦 (*Fu* on the Ruined City; Bao Zhao)  
 Wu songs of the Jiangnan region. See *Jiangnan Wu sheng*  
 Wu Weiye 吳偉業 (1609–1672)  
 Wu Wenying 吳文英 (ca. 1200–1260), long song poem on objects by  
*wu wo zhi jing* 無我之境 (selfless state)  
*wu yi zi yan yuan* 無一字言怨 (not a word verbalizes complaint)  
 Wu Zetian 武則天 (empress [r. 690–705])

*Wuchao xiaoshuo* 五朝小說 (*Fictions from Five Dynasties*)

*wujue* 五絕. See *wuyan jueju*

Wuxing 吳興 (present-day name for Huzhou 湖州 in Song times)

*wuyan jueju* 五言絕句 (*wujue* 五絕) (pentasyllabic quatrain)

*wuyan lǜshi* 五言律詩 (pentasyllabic regulated verse)

*wuyan shi* 五言詩 (pentasyllabic poetry)

*wuyin* 五陰 (*wuyun* 五蘊) (Five Skandhas)

*wuyue* 五嶽 (five sacred mountains)

*wuyun* 五蘊. See *wuyin*

“Xi qiuhua” 惜秋華 (Lamenting Autumn’s Glory)

“Xia quan” 下泉 (Falling Stream)

Xiahou Kuan 夏侯寬 (fl. 193 B.C.E.)

*xiang wai zhi xiang* 象外之象 (the image beyond images)

*xiangcao meiren* 香草美人 (fragrant grasses and fair one)

“Xianghe ge ci” 相和歌辭 (Lyrics for Accompanied Songs [poetry classification])

Xiao Gang 蕭綱 (Liang Jianwendi 梁簡文帝; Emperor Jianwen of the Liang [503–551]),  
pentasyllabic *shi* poems by

Xiao Tong 蕭統 (501–531)

Xiao Yi 蕭繹 (Liang Yuandi 梁元帝; Emperor Yuan of the Liang [r. 552–554])

Xiaohong 小紅 (Little Scarlet)

*xiaoling* 小令 (short *ci* poem)

*xiaoling* 小令 (single song poem, a *sanqu* form)

*xiaozhong jianda* 小中見大 (to see big within small)

*Xici zhuan* 繫辭傳 (*Commentary on the Appended Phrases*)

Xie Huilian 謝惠連 (397–433)

Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (康樂) (duke of Kangle [385–433]); pentasyllabic *shi* poems by

Xie Tiao 謝朓 (464–499); pentasyllabic *shi* poems by

Xie Wuyi 谢无逸 (1068–1112)

*Xijing zaji* 西京雜記 (*Miscellaneous Notes on the Western Capital*)

Xikun *ti* 西崑體 (Xikun style)

*xin* 心 (mind)

Xin Qiji 辛棄疾 (1140–1207); long song poems by

*xin yuefu* 新樂府 (new Music Bureau poetry)

*xing* 興 (affective image)

“Xing lu” 行露 (Treading Frost [Mao no. 17])

*xingling* 性靈 (natural sensibility)

*xingsi* 形似 (verisimilitude)

*xinhai* 辛亥 (the year 1191)

Xiongnu 匈奴

“Xiuzhu pian” 修竹篇 (Tapering Bamboo; Chen Zi’ang)

“Xizhai xing ma” 西齋行馬 (Riding in the Western Residence; Xiao Gang)

*Xu Tang shihua* 續唐詩話 (*A Sequel to the Poetry Talks of the Tang*)

“Xu Xiaoxiu shi” 敘小修詩 (Preface to Xiaoxiu’s Poetry; Yuan Hongdao)

*xuanxue* 玄學 (abstruse learning)

*xuanyan shi* 玄言詩 (abstruse poetry)

Xuanzong (唐) 玄宗 (Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang [r. 712–756])

*xunhuan wangfu* 循環往復 (moving in a cycle; going and returning)

*xuzi* 虛字 (empty words)

*ya* 雅 (odes; elegantiae)

*yan* 艷 (prelude)

Yan Liu 顏鉞 (seventeenth or eighteenth century), pentasyllabic regulated verse by

Yan Shigu 顏師古 (583–645)

Yan Shu 晏殊 (991–1055), short song poem by

*yan wai zhi yi* 言外之意 (meaning beyond the words)

“Yan’er mei” 眼兒媚 (Charming Eyes; Huizong)

Yang Aiai 楊愛愛 (courtesan in Hangzhou, mentioned in a twelfth-century text, who was befriended at West Lake by a young man from Nanjing named Zhang Cheng)

Yang Defeng 楊德逢 (Huyin xiansheng 湖陰先生 [fl. 1080])

Yang Deyi 楊得意 (fl. 143 B.C.E.)

Yang Guang 楊廣 (Emperor Yang of the Sui 隋煬帝 [r. 605–617])

Yang Jian 楊堅 (Sui Wendi 隋文帝; Emperor Wen of the Sui [r. 581–604])

Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 B.C.E.–18 C.E.)

Yang Zhu 楊朱 (fl. third century B.C.E.)

*yanyue* 燕樂 (banquet music)

“Yehe hua” 夜合花 (Magnolia Pumila)

*yi* 意 (idea)

*yi* 以 (in order to)

*Yi gai* 藝概 (*Essentials of the Arts*; Liu Xizai)

“Yi jiuyou” 憶舊游 (Remembering Old Journeys)

*yi wo guan wu* 以我觀物 (objects are seen through the perspective of the self)

*yi wu guan wu* 以物觀物 (objects are seen through the perspective of objects)

*yi zhong zhi jing* 意中之景 (scene within the mind)

*yichang santan* 一唱三嘆 (one note, three echoes)

“Yihu zhu” 一斛珠 (A Bushel of Pearls; Li Yu)

*Yijing* 易經 (*Book of Changes*)

*yijing* 意境 (idea-scape)

*yimin* 遺民 (people who lived under a former dynasty)  
 “Yin ma chang cheng ku xing” 飲馬長城窟行 (Song of Letting Horses Drink at the Long Wall Spring)  
 Ying Bu 英布 (Qing Bu 黥布 [d. 196 B.C.E.])  
*yixiang* 意象 (idea-image)  
*Yiyuan zhiyan* 藝苑卮言 (*Drunken Words in the Garden of Art*; Wang Shizhen)  
 Yongming period 永明 (483–493)  
*yongshi* 詠史 (reflections on history)  
*yongwu* 詠物 (poems on things)  
*yongwu ci* 詠物詞 (song lyrics on things)  
*yongwu fu* 詠物賦 (rhapsodies on things)  
*yongwu shi* 詠物詩 (poetry on things)  
*Yongxuelou gao* 咏雪樓稿 (*Drafts from the Pavilion for Chanting About Snow*; Gan Lirou)  
 “You bi” 有駉 (The Robust Horse [Mao no. 298])  
 You Guoen 游國恩 (1899–1978)  
*you jing ru qing* 由景入情 (entering the emotion through the scene)  
*you wo zhi jing* 有我之境 (state in which the self is present)  
*youxian* 游仙 (transcendental roaming)  
*Youyang zazu* 酉陽雜俎 (*Miscellanea from Youyang*; Duan Chengshi)  
*youzi* 遊子 (wanderer)  
*yu* 於 (in)  
 Yu Xin 庾信 (513–581); pentasyllabic *shi* poems by  
 Yuan Hongdao 袁宏道 (1568–1610); heptasyllabic regulated verse by  
 Yuan Mei 袁枚 (1716–1798), pentasyllabic quatrain by  
 Yuan Zhen 元稹 (779–831)  
 Yuan Zhongdao 袁宗道 (1560–1600)  
 Yuan Zongdao 袁中道 (1570–1626)  
*Yue zhang ji* 樂章集 (*Collection of Musical Pieces*; Liu Yong)  
 Yuefu 樂府 (Music Bureau)  
*yuefu* 樂府 (Music Bureau poetry); and *ci* poetry; compared with the “Nineteen Old Poems,”;  
 elements of, in Li Bai’s poetry; and Han popular songs; and Han ritual hymns; as source for  
 Tang pentasyllabic quatrains  
*Yuefu shiji* 樂府詩集 (*Collection of Yuefu Poetry*; Guo Maoqian)  
 “Yueshu” 樂書 (Monograph on Music; Shen Yue)  
*Yutai xinyong* 玉臺新詠 (*New Songs of the Jade Terrace*)

*zaju* 雜劇 (drama)  
*zayan shi* 雜言詩 (poetry of variable-character lines)  
 “Zhan cheng nan” 戰城南 (We Fought South of the Walls)

Zhang Cheng 張逞 (young man from Nanjing, mentioned in a twelfth-century text, who befriended the courtesan Yang Aiai at West Lake in Hangzhou)

Zhang Heng 張衡 (78–139)

Zhang Hua 張華 (232–300)

Zhang Yanghao 張養浩 (1269–1329), song poem by

“Zhao hun” 招魂 (Summoning the Soul)

Zhao Shixiong 趙師雄 (late sixth century)

Zhejiang 浙江 (province in southeastern China)

Zheng Zhuang Gong 鄭莊公 (Duke Zhuang of Zheng [r. 743–701 B.C.E.])

zhi 之 (of)

Zhi Yu 摯虞 (d. 211)

zhinü 織女 (Weaving Maid)

Zhiyi 智顗 (538–597)

zhong 中 (middle)

Zhong Rong 鍾嶸 (ca. 469–518)

*Zhou li* 周禮 (*Zhou Ritual*)

“Zhou nan” 周南 (*Nan-Type Songs from the States Set Up by the Duke of Zhou* [section of the *Shijing*])

*Zhou Ritual*. See *Zhou li*

Zhou Yu 周瑜 (Zhou Gongjin 周公瑾 [175–210])

Zhou Zhenfu 周振甫 (1911–2000)

*Zhouyi yinde* 周易引得 (*A Concordance to “Yi ching”*)

Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200)

Zhu Yizun 朱彝尊 (1629–1709)

zhuan 轉 (to make a turn)

Zhuangzi 莊子 (ca. 369–ca. 286 B.C.E.)

Zhuo Wenjun 卓文君 (fl. 144 B.C.E.)

“Zi jing fu Fengxian xian yonghuai wubai zi” 自京赴奉先縣咏懷五百字 (From the Capital to Fengxian: Expressing My Feelings in 500 Words; Du Fu)

ziran 自然 (nature)

ziran 自然 (said of writing, natural or spontaneous)

*Zuo Commentary on the “Spring and Autumn Annals.”* See *Zuo zhuan*

*Zuo zhuan* 左傳 (*Zuo Commentary on the “Spring and Autumn Annals”*)